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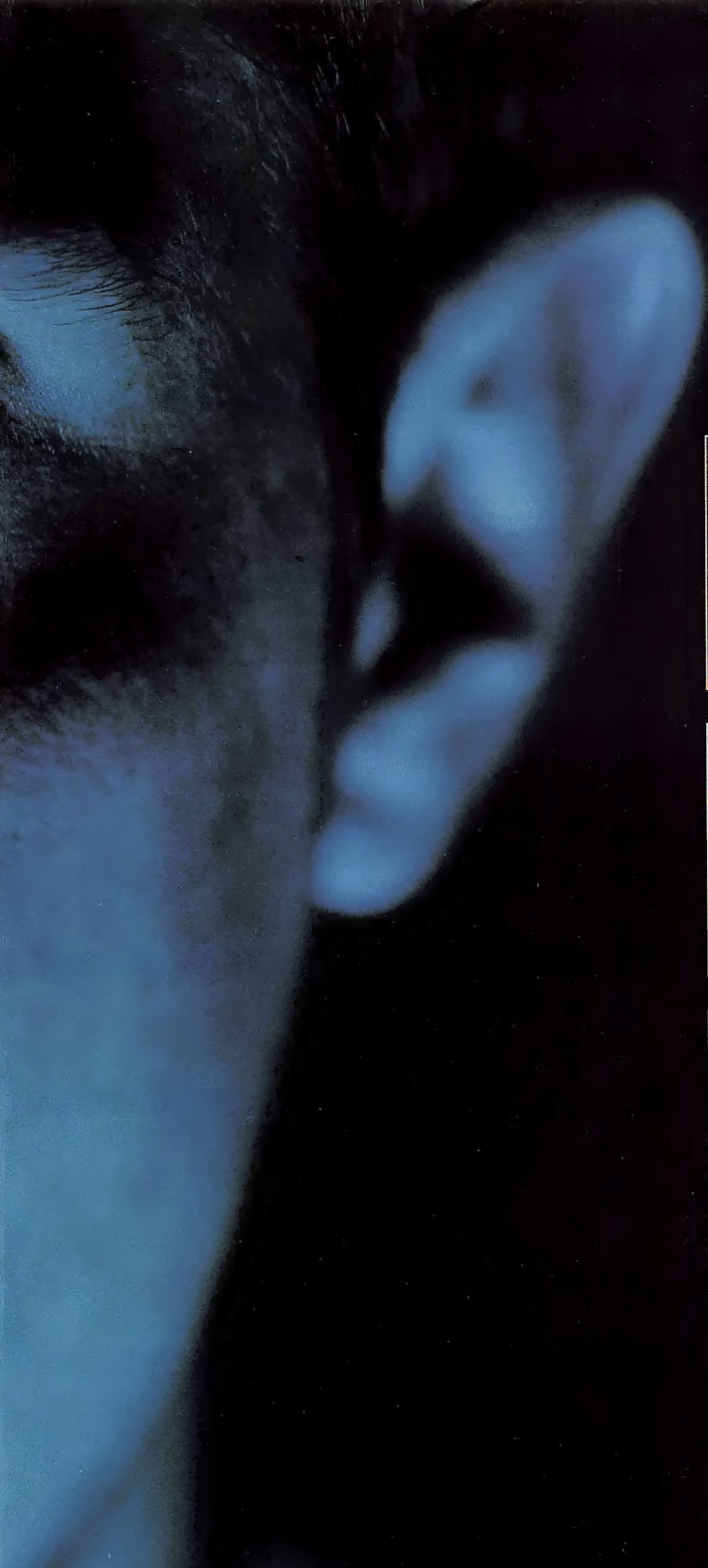

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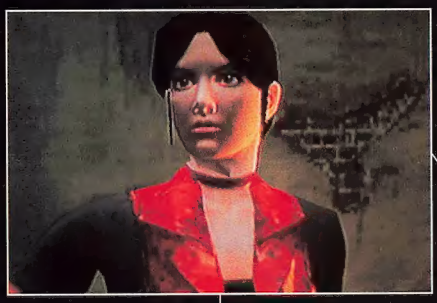

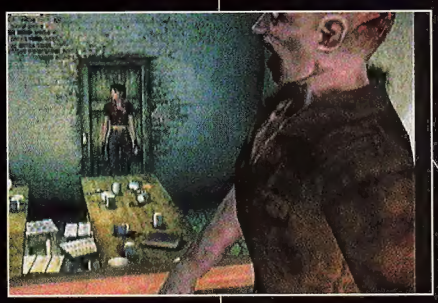

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Sega Dreamcast
IT'S THINKING

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Gamers' Republic Manifesto

Wait. I'm reading your mind... "This paper must go," you're thinking. And you're right, and it will. Please be advised that this parchment is not indicative of our dropping the price of a GR to $4.99. We got stuck with a good tonnage of it by mistake, and after this issue it will be gone forever. We will return to a nice white gloss sheet starting next month. Anyone who knows me knows how much I hate crappy paper. I can't stand the stuff, so no one is as perturbed as I about the sorry state of this Charmin-tastic stuff.

Now, on to business. Has anyone noticed that Japanese games are being localized faster than a speeding dot-com startup? A refreshing trend—gamers have been waiting for this to happen ever since Sunsoft's Mega Drive Batman in the little box, the farting Betty in DJ Boy, and the cursing intermissions of Down Load for the PC Engine. The Saturn came and went prematurely, leaving some 50-odd Japanese games in its wake, many of which could have helped turn the tide for Sega's ultimate 2D machine. Those in the know sat anxiously by, screaming at SOA to open their eyes, but to no avail. To this day I can't help but wonder how things would have been different if Sega would have listened. Imagine a Sega without the grief resulting from the Saturn's lackluster domestic lineup. Regardless, now it seems that they and their third parties have finally started racking up frequent-flyer miles. Super Magnetic Neo, Time Stalkers, E.G.G., and Chu Chu Rocket are all unlikely U.S. ports, yet they and others like them are all either here or headed our way. If this trend continues, in addition to the steady flow of games pouring out of the UK and America, we may have ourselves the first long-time love affair with Sega since the Genesis. Nintendo will most certainly follow suit with a similar support mechanism. No longer held back by the cartridge format, there will be many more developers for Dolphin compared to the N64, and the system will likely gain mainstream acceptance in Japan, where the 64 struggled for market share. I'd include Sony in my little speech too, but there's no need. They got it right from the start, hence their incredible success with their first console. Speaking of Sony, by the time you read this we'll be knee-deep in their latest, so you can bet we've all got PS2 on the brain as we close this issue. Of course, the U.S. launch will bring about the return of one of the most legendary games in platforming history—Ninja Gaiden. Ahhh, life is good. The console is once again your friend.

APRIL 2000

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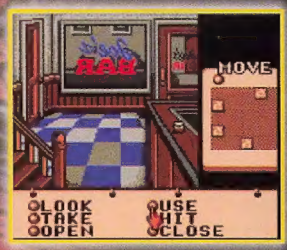

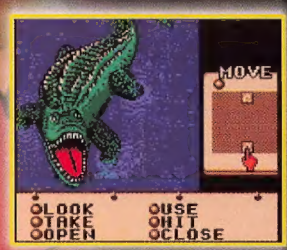

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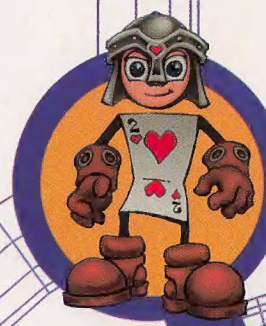
ON THE COVER: DEAD OR ALIVE 2 .26

We love Tecmo. Even though they came and took the Dead or Alive 2 cabinet away, we still love them, for the Dreamcast version remains, and we have played it to death and beyond. Hear why we're stuck on Team Ninja's latest.



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NINTENDO SHEDS LIGHT ON PERFECT DARK

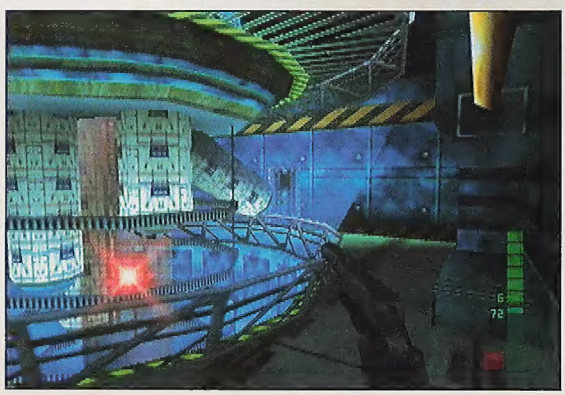
By Michael Puccini

The first week of February, Nintendo of America held a Perfect Dark Gamer's Summit in Redmond, WA, enabling their key media to be the first people in the world, outside of Rare and Nintendo, to spend some quality hours with a nearly complete version of Perfect Dark. Also at the multi-day event were other respectable NOA titles, such as Excitebike 64 and Kirby 64, but this was clearly Joanna Dark's party.

Perfect Dark is quite an accomplishment. There's really not enough space here to completely cover everything that goes on in this game. As a matter of fact, after the initial demonstration of the game by Ken Lobb—Nintendo's executive producer of Product Acquisition and Development, who showcased all of the gameplay modes, options and features—my impression was one of being overwhelmed with this massive selection. The replay value is incredibly high.

The game's superb graphics and lighting effects (including 45 minutes of cinema), the glorious soundtrack, and the impressive new inclusion of voice samples to the GoldenEye 007 engine were all being overshadowed by the depth of the gameplay. Not that that's a bad thing.

It almost seems like Rare crammed two games into one: a new FPS adventure with a great new storyline (playable, by the way, two different ways as a two-player game), and an option-filled deathmatch game. The deathmatch modes can be configured so many ways that you can still play the deathmatch modes alone. And, unlike the game's forefather, Perfect Dark includes a mode called Challenges, which allows you to open up all the levels, weapons, and secrets, without even setting foot in the one-player adventure.



The year is 2023. You play as Joanna Dark. Her character profile says that she is "The embodiment of the CI's (Carrington Institute) ideal agent, hence the callsign Perfect Dark." Oblivious to CI's purpose, Joanna unknowingly receives her missions from Daniel Carrington, the 62-year-old founder of the Institute. In this near-future storyline, the U.S. has an African-American president in the White House. There is intergalactic strife. There are also confrontations with/between the Maian's (a race of good aliens) and the Skedar Warriors (a race of bad aliens). There's even an alien named Elvis. Enough said.

As of the version played, the main screen consists of Carrington Institute, Solo Missions, Combat Simulator, Co-Operative, Counter-Operative, and Change Agent. Perfect Dark's hierarchical gameplay ladder has some great games within games, and the sheer variety of different ways you can play Perfect Dark are quite mind-numbing. Because, you see, Perfect Dark is N64 AI at its finest, just as GoldenEye 007 was back in its day (has it been that long?).

In the multiplayer games, the CPU-controlled enemies (called Simulants) can always be programmed, and you can also put them on teams with you and/or your friends. There are so many combinations, you can even pick to play by yourself with all eight Simulants on your team, and just run around willy-nilly.

In regards to the multiplayer game, Lobb said it best, "The place where this game just seems to have this never-ending life is in the ability of the player to, basically, play a level-builder. They can't change the maps, but they can now change all these different things."

NOT SO PERFECT DARK

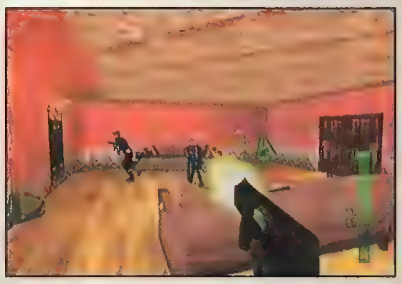
Sure, Perfect Dark is going to be a massive hit, and rightfully so. In the FPS home console genre, PD will probably be a model for game design. The great, highly replayable, option-laden game is destined to sell a sweet amount of copies and consume many hours of your time, but the title hasn't been without its share of news recently:

*** Nintendo 64 Memory Expansion Pak**

In publicizing DK64, they were always mentioning that users would have to own the N64 Expansion Pak in order to play the game. As a matter of fact, the game came with a free one. Although they haven't been saying this about PD, they should be. Because, if you don't have the extra 4 MB of memory, you will not be able to play any of the one- and two-player adventure games, nor be able to play the multiplayer games with more than two people. If you don't already have it, when you go to buy this game, spend the extra $30. I promise it will be worth it.

*** Frame-Rate Problems in the Multiplayer Mode**

When I was engaged in an extremely heated four-player battle with some friends from Nintendo (these guys are for real, I had to bring some serious game), using a number of Simulants, there were times when the game would chug really bad. The slowdown was especially evident in the more graphic-intensive levels. It should be noted, however, that we were playing an incom-



There are 72 different ways to configure the enemies, of course, you have to unlock all of them. There are six enemy difficulty levels—Meat, Easy, Normal, Hard, Perfect, and Dark—and each can have 12 personality types (do the math). Some of the different types are: PacifistSim, KamikazeeSim, something called PredatorSim (very cool), CowardSim, VendettaSim, CheetahSim, TurtleSim, and RevengeSim.

Two players can take on the adventure game in two different ways: Co-Operative and Counter-Operative. In the Co-Operative game, both players try to complete the game from beginning to end, either moving together, or splitting up and sharing the objectives. The enemy AI will obviously be more difficult. Also cool: if one of the players dies before completing the level, he/she can choose to go back into the game, at the expense of half of the current lifebar of the second player. The Counter-Operative game pits players against each other, as one player plays as Joanna and the other player plays as the enemies and tries to stop her from completing each level. Although the enemies being controlled are weak, if killed, the player warps into another enemy. As the enemy, you can find a variety of ways to stop Joanna, as there are movable objects.

In the weapons department, there are a wide variety of new firearms—some reminiscent of GE007—and each has a secondary feature, enabled by holding down the B button. Lobb said that there may be up to 44 different weapons included by the time the game is finished. There were 30 available in the version I played.

Nintendo's Ken Lobb giving us the mission briefing before setting us loose on the Perfect Dark demos.

The difficulty levels in the one-player game are still tiered like GE007, but have changed in scope. The least challenging level, Agent, will actually be easier than that of GE007, in hopes of attracting those multiplayer-only fans who bailed on the adventure game. The middle level, Secret Agent, will be the same as before. But the final level, Perfect Agent, will be several notches higher than the 00 Agent level in GE007. The ultimate difficulty level is aimed at that highly skilled gamer. Says Lobb, "We wanted to have a good, old-fashioned, 8-bit NES, you-have-to-be-a-major-stud-to-beat-it hard level...so that 95 percent of the people would never be able to beat it no matter how hard they tried."

There is no doubt that Perfect Dark will be a chart-topper for many moons, and, as Zelda did before it, will show all kinds of amazing new things that the N64 can do. Look for the game in April.

plete version of the game and some of these problems may be resolved by its release date in April.

*** Game Boy Camera Face-Mapping Option**

At E3, Rare and Nintendo were showing off the feature in Perfect Dark of being able to take a picture with the Game Boy Camera and plop it onto a face polygon of a character. The demonstration created quite a bit of excitement for the title. At the PD Gamer's Summit, I asked if the feature was still being included. Ken Lobb replied, "I'm sorry to say that the face mapping feature has been deleted." He went on to say, "If you were to have a camera on this version, it would crash hard. Even with the expansion RAM, its not enough to get the camera mode working." With frame-rate problems already in the game, this was probably a good idea.

But could this be a moral issue? With all the debate over violence lately, having an image of your friend on which to unleash several rounds of ammunition would not be in Nintendo's best interest.

*** "M" (Mature) Rating, Suitable Only for Persons Age 17 or Older**

A sure sign that the landscape of the video game industry has changed is that Perfect Dark will be the first title released in NOA's history that will include an M rating. The rating is supposedly due to the inclusion of animated violence and strong language. From what I saw, I guess it's because of the death animations and the fact that the blood stains on the wall stay there. (Just between you and me, it's no worse than prime time cop shows or Springer). Well, few things are worse than Springer.

NOA SUMMIT INCLUDES U.S. DEBUTS & NO SHOWS

Although the focus of the Perfect Dark Nintendo Gamer's Summit was obviously Perfect Dark, NOA did take the opportunity to show off some of their other highly anticipated products.

EXCITEBIKE 64

If you like Motocross games or were a huge fan of the original NES Excitebike, you're likely chomping at the bit for the much-anticipated release of Excitebike 64. And, from the looks of it, it's been well worth the wait.

Watching Excitebike 64 is nearly as fun as playing it. The game, as WaveRace 64 did, showcases the N64's capabilities, as all of the riders, bikes, and crashes have incredible real-time physics. The talented designers at Left Field have balanced the game superbly, melding gameplay and sound effects as rich as the visuals. Excite bike 64 is by far the best-looking Motocross/Enduro game ever to appear on a home console. The particle effects are great, seen both in the exhaust and the dust coming up from the tires (so much more realistic than the pixels we're used to) and the constant shifting of tire tracks and line markings is very impressive.

When performing aerial stunts, which are easy to grasp, a picture-in-picture screen offers a side view of the trick being performed. Overall the control is accurate and very intuitive; tight corners can be negotiated with ease via the shoulder buttons, and the trigger acts as a throttle as usual.

The gameplay is definitely more along the lines of an arcade racer, though simulation elements do play a part, and the frame rate is always smooth without a trace of clipping.

Play modes include Season, Exhibition Race, Time Trials, and Special Tracks and Tutorial, Novice, Amateur, and Pro rankings. There are hidden tracks as well along with both indoor and outdoor venues. Of course, the create-a-track option that helped make the original such a hit is now completely polished. The variety of gameplay is further enhanced, as the Special Tracks option includes a Stunt Course, a Hill Climb, and a multiplayer game of Soccer.

Excitebike 64 is scheduled for release on May 1.

KIRBY 64

The only new major title, which was on display for the first time in the U.S., was Kirby 64. And although there were just a couple areas available to play, it was more than enough to evoke excitement for the jiggly one's 64 debut. Kirby 64 still follows the classic Kirby mold from the 8- and 16-bit days, with the obvious graphical enhancements that now integrate 2D gameplay with Kirby's fruity look and 3D backgrounds.

For those unfamiliar with Kirby's gameplay, he inhales his enemies and then utilizes them. One cool new gameplay addition is the Kirby slide, where he (it?) slides across the screen, mowing down everything in his path. The other interesting new aspect of Kirby 64 is a brief but enjoyable mine-cart area.

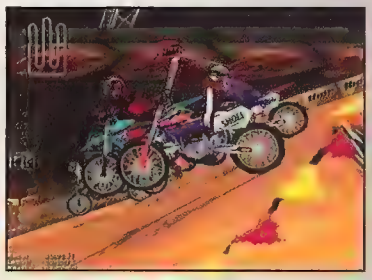
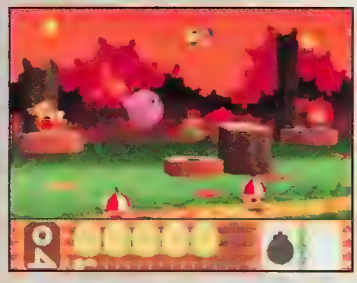
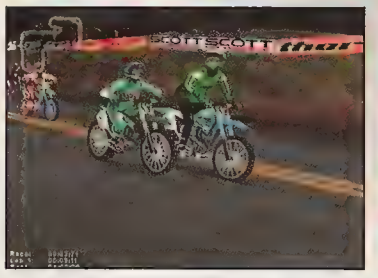
Kirby 64 is scheduled for a June 12 release.

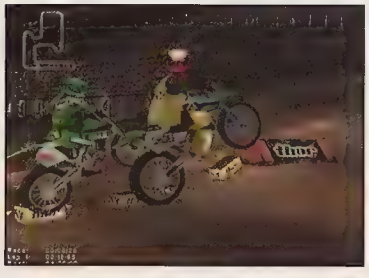
NOTABLES

Not to be swept under the rug by the N64 showings, there were some new Game Boy Color games in the house too. The Nintendo Software Technology group showed the recently released Bionic Commando and the impressive port of SNK's classic, Zelda-like adventure/RPG Crystalis. Two other GBC titles in development at the NOA treehouse were shown by members of that team: Alice in Wonderland, a side-scrolling action/adventure; and a title called Warlocked, an impressive fantasy strategy/adventure game. Not on display, but making the release list for this year, are a GBC version of Perfect Dark, and Wario Land 3, which utilizes all of the GBC's new capabilities.

On the morning of the last day of the event, Peter Main, Nintendo's executive vice-president of sales and marketing, presented some sales figures and release dates. For N64, the list included Perfect Dark, Excitebike 64, Kirby 64, Banjo-Tooie (summer), The Legend of Zelda: Mask of the Mujula (fall), Pikachu VRS (holiday), Conker's Bad Fur Day (holiday) and Mickey's Racing (holiday). Curiously missing from the list were Super Mario Adventure (the new N64 Mario RPG game), Eternal Darkness, and EarthBound 64. There was no information available regarding any of these titles. But we know they're out there.

It's old news by now that Rare, having heard our cries—"it's just so damn cute!"—about Conker, has turned the little critter into a hideous little vermin'! Now we have ourselves a game! No shots of the new Conker were available at press time.



THANKS FOR EVERYTHING, HOWARD LINCOLN

As of the first week in February, one of the most renowned men in the worldwide video-game industry has stepped down. Small-time corporate lawyer-turned Nintendo of America executive, Howard Lincoln has traded in his controller for a pair of cleats, retiring from his position as Chairman of Nintendo of America to become Chairman and CEO of the Seattle Mariners baseball team (of which Nintendo has a majority interest).

His story is as Americana as baseball itself. Born and raised in Oakland, CA, Lincoln was the son of a railroad executive during WWII. As a youth, he would earn the highest degree in the Boy Scouts of America—Eagle Scout. He was even a model for a Norman Rockwell painting. Lincoln would attend UC Berkeley, receive a law degree, and serve his country as a legal counsel during the Vietnam War.

As a rising lawyer in a Seattle-based law firm, Lincoln first heard of NOA by helping to write legal contracts for one of his clients who was NOA's first arcade game distributor, predating the release of the arcade game Donkey Kong. His first work directly with the upstart, unknown NOA, and its president Minoru Arakawa (affectionately known as Mr. A), was hammering out a contract for his new client, in 1981, granting Coleco the exclusive home console rights for Donkey Kong. Since then, Lincoln virtually wrote the book on legal matters in the industry. Lincoln's first position at NOA was senior vice-president, second-in-command only to Mr. A, son-in-law of Nintendo Co. Ltd. (NCL) chief, Hiroshi Yamauchi (once and for years the most powerful man in the video game industry).

Lincoln would become famous as he quickly made his marks in a variety of high-profile industry battles, including those with Sony, Sega, Atari Corp., Atari Games/Tengen, a variety of third-party publishers, and in garnering the rights to a little game called Tetris. From the start, Lincoln helped create a love-hate relationship between third-party licensees and NOA with one of the most fierce, stringent, controlled licensing agreements ever created. On the one hand, to adhere to the company's family-oriented values, NOA would have approval of and guidelines for each game's content and packaging, and would require licensees to order a minimum quantity of cartridges. On the other hand, the licensees would become rich beyond their wildest dreams.

From the beginning of their working together, Lincoln and Mr. A were a nearly inseparable team and, along with some of the most popular intellectual properties in the history of entertainment, would create a multi-billion dollar subsidiary. Two of the biggest signings Lincoln secured in the company's history were getting the rights to Tetris, and acquiring a software company called Rare.

Needless to say, in almost 20 years of service with Nintendo, Lincoln has some great stories to tell—one of the first great ones (and the one that essentially made him a fearless negotiator and a feared attorney) being how he took on and defeated MCA/Universal Studios and one of the most powerful Hollywood studio executives over whether the game Donkey Kong infringed on the rights of the studio's King Kong movies. It ended up being really simple: Lincoln found out that the King Kong name was never protected by the studio and therefore was in public domain.

Lincoln also delivered the words that shot through the June 1991 CES show and irreversibly changed the future of the industry. On one day of the show, Sony announced that they were entering the video game industry with a Sony/Nintendo cartridge and disc-based system called PlayStation. The next day, slapping Sony in the face, Lincoln, speaking on behalf of NCL, shocked the world by announcing that Nintendo would be working with Philips on a similar system instead. (The move made sense, because by now, according to the terms of the arrangement, Nintendo would have been swallowed up by the larger, more powerful Sony.)

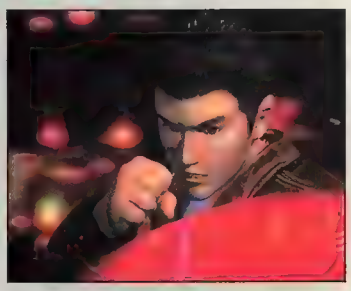
And, in 1993, when Sega, marketing for its color-screen Game Gear, assaulted the Game Boy monochrome screen with a commercial where actors portrayed halfwits playing GB, Lincoln went after them. Days later, Sega pulled the ads at the behest of a consumer watchdog group. Lincoln then wrote the following poem to Sega's Tom Kalinski which ended up in an article about Lincoln on the front page of the Wall Street Journal: "Roses are red, violets are blue, so you had a bad day, boo hoo-boo hoo."

The industry has definitely lost one of its finest. Gamers' Republic would like to thank Howard Lincoln for all that he's done to better our hobby and passion, and wish him the best in his new endeavors with the Seattle Mariners, and with his golf game. You will be missed.

BROS. PLAY WITH STEEL BALLS

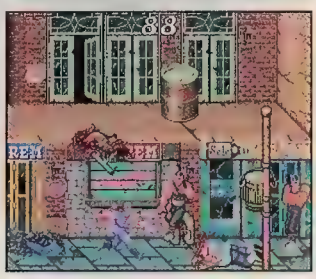
Creators of such über classics as Xenon II, Z, Cadaver, Chaos Engine 1 and 2, and that crusty (and hard!) old Genesis and Amiga classic, Gods, the Bitmap Bros. are set to assail our space once again with their second sequel based on their ultimate cyber-sports contest, Speedball. Whether you played it on Atari ST, Commodore Amiga or Sega Genesis, if you played it, you became addicted to its fast, accurate gameplay and futuristic veneer. With Speedball 2100 for the PlayStation, the Bros. are promising to bring all of the bone-crunching action home in a completely up-to-date package for 2000. Adhering to the top-down perspective, it will be interesting to see how they choose to do so. We're hoping for better perspectives on the players and, of course, realistic animation. We'll have the full story next month.

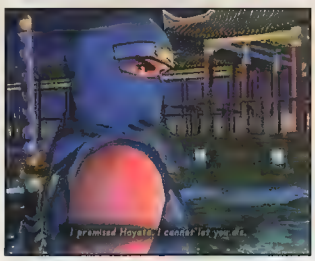
VERONICA BEATS SHENMUE



The phenomenon may exist in a lesser form than it does here in the States, but Japanese gamers are just as guilty of buying what they know. In its first week of sales, Biohazard Code: Veronica sold roughly 380,000 copies, easily securing the top spot on the charts. By comparison, Yu Suzuki's ultra-ambitious and highly anticipated Shenmue Chapter 1 has sold just under 500,000 since its release in December. Both great games, it's surprising just how much easier a time a sequel has racking up good sales figures than an original title, even one as high-profile as Shenmue. But what must really chap Sega's hide is the fact the Code: Veronica didn't cost nearly as much as Shenmue, which is rumored to have had a budget somewhere in the neighborhood of $40 million.

HOUSE FULL OF NINJAS





When the PlayStation 2 launches in the U.S. towards the end of the year, expect to see a familiar face in the software lineup – Ninja Gaiden will be in the house. Ryu Hayabusa (not to be confused with Fighter Hayabusa of NES Pro Wrestling fame, whose stunning Back Brain Kick was the downfall of many an opponent) and friends will be greeting American gamers as they get their first taste of what is sure to be an extraordinary system. The game has been in development since late last year, with Tecmo's Team Ninja working hard on it.

Ninja Gaiden may not be recognizable to the neophyte game player, but old-schoolers are no doubt well-versed in the insane platforming difficulty associated with the series, which has appeared in arcades, the NES, Lynx, Game Boy, Game Gear, Master System, PC Engine, SNES, and Mega Drive. Ryu also stars in Dead or Alive 1 and 2. Ninja Gaiden (the original NES version) was also the first game to ever feature a cinema scene, and who knows what games today would look like if it weren't for those. Here's hoping they somehow find a way to resurrect Bloody Malth, one of the coolest villains ever.

DC'S ONLINE FUTURE

With all the hype surrounding the PS2's as yet untried network features, Sega of Japan has decided to fire back with their own ambitious plans for the DC's online future. First there's the DC Zip drive, which we've known about for some time, but Sega recently announced a high-capacity VMU and a new high-speed cable modem and network, allowing Japanese users to painlessly play online games and download MP3s and nudie pics to their heart's content. How this will affect Sega of America's online plans is uncertain, as the domestic gaming network infrastructure is just now being rolled out with Chu Chu Rocket.

PS2 DVD DETAILS

Sony Computer Entertainment International has released details concerning the DVD capabilities of the PS2. In addition to the expected multi-angle, multi-soundtrack features, PS2 DVD will support anamorphic encoding for widescreen televisions, both optical and electrical outputs for Dolby Digital and DTS, and will even support parental lock-out codes (not that any parent could ever figure this out). It was also revealed that DVDs will not play without a special driver, which will be included on the bundled 8MB Memory Card. This led to speculation that someone could conceivably devise a driver that could circumvent a DVD's regional encoding, allowing users to play American films on their import PS2s, though this seems unlikely.

INCOMPATIBILITY?

It has been revealed in Japanese newspapers that there may be some compatibility issues between the PlayStation 2 and certain PS games. Though the majority of original PlayStation discs should work in the PS2, it seems that certain games, specifically those that access the PS hardware directly, as opposed to going through the PS' APIs, may not work on PS2. Sony should release a list of incompatible games soon.

THE OOPS FILES

First we'll do the honors for last month's recipient of the oops file. We listed ADV Films as the publisher of the anime "X" in our Anime Republic preview, when the publisher is actually Manga Video. In this very issue there exists oops files as well. How can that be you ask? Well, our cover went out days prior to the rest of the book and at the last minute our interview with Ozomatli was postponed. We'll bring you that interview in April. Accordingly, Crave informed us of Super Magnetic Niu Niu's new name after the cover flew the coup, hence the "Neo" on the cover and the "Niuniu" on the layout. We just pray they don't remove the real name from his cool little flat head.

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SEGA, BABY...SEGA!

On February 5, Sega of America held a Dreamcast championship inside the Las Vegas Dreamworks. The event had contestants from across the nation give their best at a round of Sonic Adventure in an effort to walk away $15,000 richer. The night started with a nice dinner, where we caught up with our friends at Visual Concepts, then it was off to see the evenings event unfold.

Outside the building, Sega had skylights going projecting giant Sonics to entice everyone on the strip to check out the action inside. The turnout was great and the participants gave their best performance. Prizes included Dreamcast systems, copies of Sonic Adventure and Crazy Taxi, very stylized bronze Sonic trophies—and one lucky guy by the name of Mark Adams walked away with his pockets $15,000 heavier!

To cap off the event, 311 played providing a lengthy show for all of the Sega fans present. Others seen enjoying the event were Sonic Team's Yuji Naka and Jimmy Kimmle from the *Man Show*.

LARA SWINGS BOTH WAYS!

Enjoying four adventures inside Sony's fun box, Lara is finally able to strut her stuff on the Dreamcast. The deal making Tomb Raider a PlayStation-only title has expired and now Lara and company are ready to slip into something more comfortable and accommodating. Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation is slated for sometime in Q2 and will surely go through some of the same cosmetic upgrades Raziel did in Soul Reaver.

AIBO IS COOL...FOR ME TO POOP ON!

Sega Toys has announced plans to release POO-CHI, an interactive robot dog remarkably similar to Sony's AIBO in appearance (not) for 2,980 yen (about $28) beginning on April 1. Though not nearly as advanced in function, POO-CHI will undoubtedly make for a happier home. The letters in POO-CHI stand for "Partner 2000 Communication Heartful Interactive."

Like AIBO, POO-CHI contains sensors to move its legs, ears, and eyes, and responds positively to good treatment. But something tells me that with a price tag roughly equal to one tenth of AIBO's, its sensors and behavior are not going to be all that sophisticated. It does, however, have six different moods, and unlike AIBO, it comes in three different colors: blue, green and pink.

Sega Toys plans to sell one million units in Japan during the first 12 months of availability, with projections for overseas sales totaling over three million units. Despite its silly name, POO-CHI is pretty cute. The robot pup will go on sale first in Japan but will be available in the U.S. and Europe later this year. Tiger Electronics, the U.K. Company responsible for the Furby madness that once took the world by storm, will handle distribution of the robot toy outside of Japan.

ARTFX Produced by KOTOBUKIYA Co.

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BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

After waiting eons for a quality RPG to hit the N64, in wanders one of Enix's best...in Japan at least.

The latest in Enix's Mysterious Dungeon series, Furai no Shiren (or "Shiren the Wanderer"), is set to be released sometime this spring for N64. The series was based on Toruneko, who you may remember as a tool merchant in the NES Dragon Quest IV. The series is characterized as "mysterious," because of its random dungeons – à la Evolution. The caverns you explore are generated each time you play through them, and populated with new monsters, treasures, and traps. Of course, Shiren 2 comes with this feature, in addition to Shuffle dungeons, which are brighter and wider dungeons, originally appearing in SNES installments of the series.

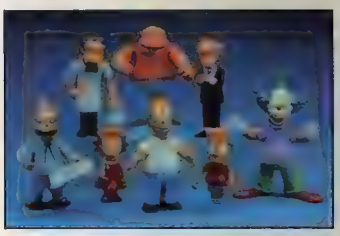
Your mission is to eliminate all the villains who ransack nearby villages, and ultimately destroy their fortress before they manage to complete it. It's good to know that a cute, fun RPG can be found on the N64, which is of course famous for its dearth of such games. No word yet on a U.S. release, but one would hope Furai no Shiren somehow makes it over for the 64's long goodbye.

COMIX ZONE...

Thanks in part to game franchises like Tomb Raider and Legacy of Kain, comics seem to be enjoying somewhat of a resurgence. Taking their eminent convergence with other forms of media one step further, many hot new properties are being slated for mass marketdom right from the outset. Joe Madueira's latest, for example (from his newly formed company Beyond Entertainment), Battle Chasers (seen right), a lordly comic laced with Landstalker and Zelda influences, is rumored to already have toys and video games in the works. And rightfully so – the story has all of the makings of a classic role-playing adventure, and the character designs are simply remarkable. With the advent of polygon powerhouses like the PS2, comic books may finally come to life and actually look like the artists intend. One need only think back to what Spawn looked like on the PS to appreciate what is to come. In a related story, Todd McFarlane has already announced that his new game Spawn: In the Demon's Hand, currently in development by Capcom for release on the Naomi arcade board, will be coming to PS2 in 2001. No word yet on how it will differ from this year's eminent Dreamcast release. Other comic licenses getting the video-game treatment include Spiderman (but you knew that), Blade (*Blade 2* is due Summer 2001), and X-Men on the heels of the live action movie. Seen Rebecca Romijn Stamos as Mystique yet? Blue is back!

TOYING AROUND

You've probably noticed by now that GR Synthetix is missing! As I write this, Toy Fair 2000 is just kicking off and we've got a crack reporter on the scene. Look for our extended coverage in next month's GR Synthetix Toy Fair feature. Some of this year's booty includes a whole slew of new McFarlane figures like Movie Maniacs 3 (Edward Scissorhands, The Fly, Ash from Evil Dead, and Snake Plissken), Austin Powers 9" Fat Bastard (possibly the phatest toy ever), Wild Things, NHL PA, Nitro Riders, Rob Zombie, Spawn 17, Ultima Online, South Park, HR Giger and Akira. And that's just McFarlane. ReSaurus' Street Fighter series 2 will be on hand featuring Sagat, Akuma, Necro, Chun Li, Remy, and Charlie. Palisades will march out their awesome Front Mission mechs, and Hasbro will debut their teenage crime fighter with a 9" Batman Beyond figure. From Titan A.E. to Shaft, to Mission Impossible 2, this should be a show to remember for Hollywood as well. The Simpsons Toys should be hitting stores now, and they are some of the coolest ever. Thanks to Playmates' Intelli-Tronic voice activation technology, each compatible character comes to life within each interactive environment (initially the Kwik-E-Mart, Living Room, and Nuclear Powerplant are available with more to follow). And we're talkin' 40 phrases per character here, people! These are some seriously cool toys —easily PlayMates' best line yet. We'll have all the scoops next month.



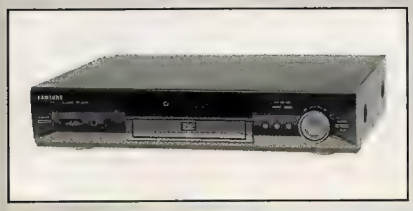
CONVERSING WITH GOD

In a recent conversation with G.O.D., one of their disciples said unto us that Psycho Circus (the Kiss game with the Quake crunch), Heavy Metal F.A.K.K. 2 (based on the soon to be released animated film which will be worshiped by young males worldwide), and Rune (their hi-powered new medieval action/adventure) are all headed for the Sega Dreamcast in 2000. I believe Max Payne was mentioned as well. This isn't just great news for you and me, but for Sega as well. Dallas-based Gathering of Developers, who actually work out of a former church (how cool is that), is composed solely of hard-core gamers. In other words, these guys do chicken right. We're already booking flights for a closer look at G.O.D., so look for a feature coming soon. In the meantime, simulation fans should keep their eyes peeled for Railroad Tycoon, their first title for the Dreamcast. Dare I say it's the sim you've been praying for!

NUON STILL SLATED TO SHIP

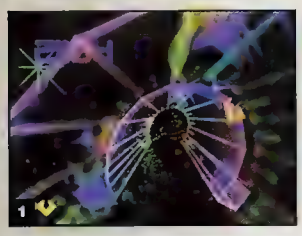
It's been a few years since it was announced, but VM Labs' NUON, the technology formerly known as Project X, is still on its way to store shelves. Video games remain part of the plan for NUON, but the main emphasis is on how it can enhance DVD players. NUON, in fact, is not any kind of game system, but a technology that will be licensed by companies like Samsung, Raite, and Toshiba. This technology will add new features to DVD players, including the ability to play NUON-specific games.

The first NUON-enhanced DVD player is Samsung's DVD-N2000 (below), scheduled to ship this spring. For $499, consumers will get the main unit, a controller, and the puzzle game Ballistic (previously seen on PlayStation and Game Boy Color). Six other games are scheduled to ship when the DVD-N2000 launches: Tempest 3000, a remake of the classic shooter (pic 1); Iron Soldier, a mech combat game based on the Atari Jaguar title; Merlin Karting, a CTR-like racing game (pic 2); Freefall 3050 AD, a 360 degree shooter (pics 3 & 4); aMaze, based on Labyrinth, that game everyone played when they were young where they tilt the board and try to maneuver the marble to the end without falling in the holes; and the PC classic Myst.



Major game companies have signed on as potential software developers, including Capcom, Acclaim, THQ, Sunsoft, GT Interactive and others familiar with console software. Peripheral manufacturers from the console world are also making NUON-compatible products, including Nyko and Eleven Engineering, a company that makes a wireless PlayStation controller called Airplay.

However, VM Labs is mostly touting DVD features like elimination of choppiness, increased zoom capabilities, and multiple-angle viewing. The company states that its market is DVD enthusiasts and families, and that NUON is not meant to compete with PlayStation 2 or other gaming systems. Instead, VM Labs is opting for the CD-i approach, which, as gamers may recall, didn't have much impact on console gaming.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NINTENDO TIDBITS

From the "No-Brainer" department: Claude Comair, Chairman of the Nintendo Software Technology group and founder of the Digipen school of graphic design, informed the press at the Perfect Dark Gamer's Summit that the Nintendo in-house software group was currently working on a Dolphin title. Comair did not name any specific title nor release any other information about the game, only that they had been working on the title since late-1999.

From the "What the F*#! Happened to Conker?!" department: Ken Lobb, Nintendo's executive producer, Product Acquisition and Development, surprised a throng of gaming journalists right near the end of the PD media event with a completely unbelievable videotape of Rare's holiday 2000 title—Conker's Bad Fur Day. As compared to the cute, warm and cuddly critter game seen at E3 a couple years ago, this was quite the unexpected departure. The videotape started with a CG cinema of a bunch of army men squirrels, in an amphibious soldier transport heading for the beach, talking to each other in classic South Park style – complete with foul language being bleeped out. The door opened to drop them off on the shore and then, all of a sudden, they get gunned down as splats of blood hit the screen. It was quite amusing, as the gathered crowd laughed with childish glee. The game is not only destined to be NOA's second "M" rated title ever, but proudly so, as the ESRB ratings mark was stamped on the end of the clip in an almost braggadocio fashion. The clip showed a variety of adult humor, including: (what looked like) a level boss with huge testicles, a text bubble above a character saying "F—- off!", and sexual connotations from a sexy female animal (I can't believe I just said that). The gameplay clips themselves still looked like Banjo-Kazooie, hence the "back-to-the-drawing-board" mentality of Rare's Conker team when the game was first seen. There was a cool, real-time gameplay clip of Conker swimming, doing the backstroke. There was more, but the clips went by so fast, I couldn't write down everything. After the applause at the end of the viewing, when I asked Ken Lobb to replay the tape, he gave an emphatic (and proud) "Uhhh, no."

KEEPING BOND IN THE DARK

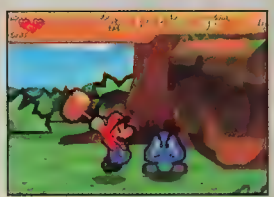
One of the stranger items of news coming out of Nintendo's Perfect Dark Gamers' Summit involves a potentially exciting undocumented feature in the successor to GoldenEye. As you may know, Rare had planned to include more Bonds than just Brosnan in their blockbuster first-person shooter. Though full implementation of the legendary agents was quashed by licensing and scheduling difficulties, portraits of Sean Connery and Roger Moore could be found in the 007 select screens through the use of a Game Shark.

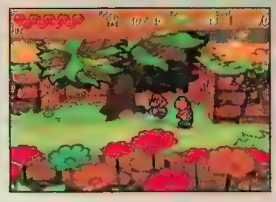
Now it looks like the legend just might get a second lease on life. Few details are available as yet, but we're told that, among the many character models in Perfect Dark, there are 3D representations of Connery, Moore, David Niven, and the incomparable George Lazenby, for use in the game's four-player deathmatch mode. Evidently, Rare and Nintendo went the extra mile to secure these licenses in order to make up for the surprising removal of the Game Boy Camera face-mapping feature, which caused some moral conundra at the eleventh hour. We're not sure how to reveal the Bonds as yet – they may require a code, or perhaps they're simply unlockable in the single-player mode. Either way, we'll try and have details as soon as we get our hands on the game.

MA-MA-MIA!

W hen Super Mario RPG 2, initially scheduled for release in Japan this past January, failed to show up, and subsequently was a no-show at the recent Nintendo Summit, we began to worry. Would we be deprived of the lordliest 2D RPG ever devised? Well, no, but the news isn't all good. While Super Mario RPG 2 is still slated for release sometime this year overseas, one must worry about the chances for an American version, what with the Dolphin swimming in late this year or early next. With any luck, the game will show up at this year's E3.

The game features the same style of turn-based fighting as SM RPG, with an emphasis on timing, and incorporates 2D sprites and 3D backgrounds with spectacular results.





database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS

NPD THE NPD GROUP, INC.

MONTHLY CHARTS PROVIDED BY NPD DATA TRACKING SERVICES

top ten selling playstation titles

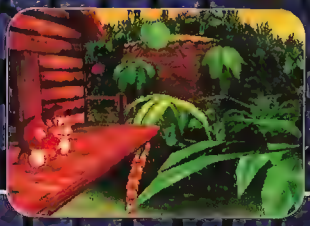
*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 2-JANUARY 15 2000

1. GRAN TURISMO 2	SONY	6. TOMORROW NEVER DIES	EA
2. T. HAWK PRO SKATER	ACTIVISION	7. CRASH BANDICOOT WARP	SONY
3. GRAN TURISMO	SONY	8. MEDAL OF HONOR	EA
4. SPYRO THE DRAGON	SONY	9. METAL GEAR SOLID	KONAMI
5. DUKES OF HAZZARD	SOUTHPEAK	10. FROGGER	HASBRO

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 2-JANUARY 15 2000

1. DONKEY KONG 64	NINTENDO	6. WCW/NWO REVENGE	THQ
2. SUPER SMASH BROS.	NINTENDO	7. A BUG'S LIFE	ACTIVISION
3. NAMCO MUSEUM 64	NAMCO	8. SUPER MARIO 64	NINTENDO
4. GLOVER	HASBRO	9. ZELDA: O.o.T.	NINTENDO
5. TOY STORY 2	ACTIVISION	10. POKÉMON SNAP	NINTENDO



top ten selling dreamcast titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 2-JANUARY 15 2000

1. NFL 2K	SEGA	6. SOUL CALIBUR	NAMCO
2. NBA 2K	SEGA	7. VIGILANTE 8: 2nd Off.	ACTIVISION
3. SONIC ADVENTURE	SEGA	8. READY 2 RUMBLE	MIDWAY
4. SEGA BASS FISHING	SEGA	9. TEST DRIVE 6	INFORGRAMES
5. FIGHTING FORCE 2	EIDOS	10. EVOLUTION	UBI SOFT

top ten selling pc titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD DECEMBER 1999

1. WHO WANTS..MILLIONAIRE	DISNEY	6. BARBIE GOTTA GROOVE	MATTEL
2. ROLLER COASTER TYCOON	HASBRO	7. AGE OF EMPIRES 2	MICROSOFT
3. POKÉMON STUDIO BLUE	LEARNING CO.	8. DEER HUNTER 3	WIZARDWORKS
4. POKÉMON STUDIO RED	LEARNING CO.	9. FROGGER	HASBRO
5. QUAKE 3 ARENA	ACTIVISION	10. BIG GAME HUNTER 3	HEADGAMES

top ten selling overall console titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JANUARY 2-JANUARY 15 2000

1. GRAN TURISMO 2-PS	SONY	6. POKÉMON BLUE-GBC	NINTENDO
2. POKÉMON YELLOW-GBC	NINTENDO	7. SPYRO THE DRAGON-PS	SONY
3. T HAWK PRO SKATER-PS	ACTIVISION	8. POKÉMON RED-GBC	NINTENDO
4. DONKEY KONG 64-GBC	NINTENDO	9. DUKES OF HAZZARD-PS	SOUTHPEAK
5. GRAN TURISMO-PS	SONY	10. TOMORROW NEVER DIES-PS	EA

world republic top ten games

top ten japanese titles

1. BIO HAZARD Gun Survivor PS
2. POPOLOCROIS STORY II PS
3. ACCOMPANIMENT ANYWHERE Addition Disk PS
4. POCKET MONSTER SILVER GB
5. CRAZY TAXI DC
6. POCKET MONSTER GOLD GB
7. DINKY KONG & DIXIE KONG GB
8. CARD CAPTOR SAKURA: Clow Card Magic PS
9. VIRTUAL PRO WRESTLING II: Royal Road Succession N64
10. ROOMMANIA #203 DC

* FROM JAN 24 ~ JAN 30 2000

top ten u.s. titles

1. GRAN TURISMO 2 PS
2. FIFA 2000 PC/PS/GBC
3. MEDAL OF HONOUR PS
4. CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: Season 99/00 PC/MAC
5. TOMORROW NEVER DIES PS
6. TOMB RAIDER 4 PC/PS
7. CRASH BANDICOOT 2 PS
8. COLIN McRAE RALLY PC/PS
9. TEKKEN 3 PS
10. AGE OF EMPIRES 2: The Age of Kings PC

* WEEK ENDING 1/29/00

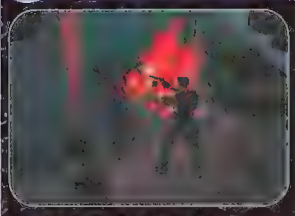
gamers' republic top ten games

* BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH FEBRUARY 15, 2000

d. halverson

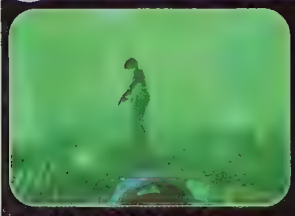
1. SUPER MAGNETIC NEO DC
2. CODE: VERONICA DC
3. RAYMAN 2 DC
4. EXCITEBIKE 64 N64
5. FURFIGHTERS DC
6. METAL SLUG X NG
7. RIDGE RACER 64 N64
8. MDK 2 DC
9. FEAR EFFECT DC
10. BERSERK DC

b. siechter



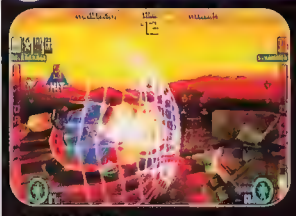
1. CODE: VERONICA DC
2. RAYMAN 2 DC
3. SUPER MAGNETIC NEO DC
4. FEAR EFFECT PS
5. NIGHTMARE CREATURES 2 DC
6. DEAD OR ALIVE 2 DC
7. FUR FIGHTERS DC
8. RESIDENT EVIL 2 DC
9. SUPER MARIO 64 N64
10. POWER STONE DC

mike hobbs



1. CODE: VERONICA DC
2. VAGRANT STORY PS
3. RAYMAN 2 DC
4. SM NIU NIU DC
5. KIKAIOH DC
6. CHU CHU ROCKET DC
7. RESCUE SHOT BUBIBO PS
8. COLONY WARS Red Sun PS
9. ACE COMBAT 3 PS
10. JET DE GO! PS

t. stratton



1. KIKAIOH DC
2. NBA 2K DC
3. T. HAWK PRO SKATER PS
4. GODZILLA NES
5. NFL 2K PS
6. MARIO GOLF N64
7. BASEBALL STARS 2 NGPC
8. CRAZY TAXI DC
9. MEGA MAN 5 NES
10. TECMO BOWL NES

pooch

1. PERFECT DARK N64
2. SYPHON FILTER 2 PS
3. CRAZY TAXI DC
4. DEAD OR ALIVE 2 ARCADE
5. EXCITEBIKE 64 N64
6. T. HAWK PRO SKATER PS
7. SILENT SCOPE ARCADE
8. WAVE RACE 64 N64
9. MARIO GOLF N64
10. SUPER METROID SNES

edd gear

1. GRAN TURISMO 2 PS
2. SONIC POCKET ADV. NGPC
3. DINKY KONG GBC
4. SPYRO 2 PS
5. T. HAWK PRO SKATER PS
6. EVOLUTION NEO NGPC
7. NFS PORSCHE PS
8. RAYMAN 2 N64
9. CRAZY TAXI DC
10. METAL GEAR SOLID PS

j. r. haugen

1. CODE: VERONICA DC
2. SM NIU NIU DC
3. CHU CHU ROCKET DC
4. NOX PC
5. RESCUE SHOT BUBIBOH PS
6. LEGEND OF DRAGOON PS
7. FINAL FANTASY VIII PS
8. SHEN MUE DC
9. THE SIMS PC
10. RYGAR NES

dave smith

1. DEAD OR ALIVE 2 ARCADE
2. QUAKE III ARENA PC
3. PUYO PUYO DA! DC
4. KING OF FIGHTERS 97 ARCADE
5. UNINVITED MAC
6. BEYOND DARK CASTLE MAC
7. MAGICAL DROP 3 SATURN
8. LAST ALERT TURBO-CD
9. TOP SKATER ARCADE
10. HUNT THE WUMPUS TI

REAL F'N F

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Animated Violence
Strong Language

NINTENDO64

PlayStation

NO GAMERS UNDER 17
NO EXCEPTIONS

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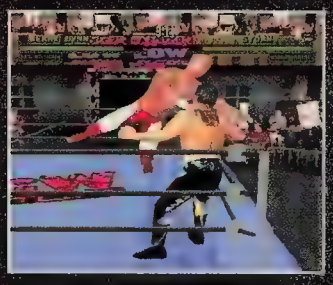

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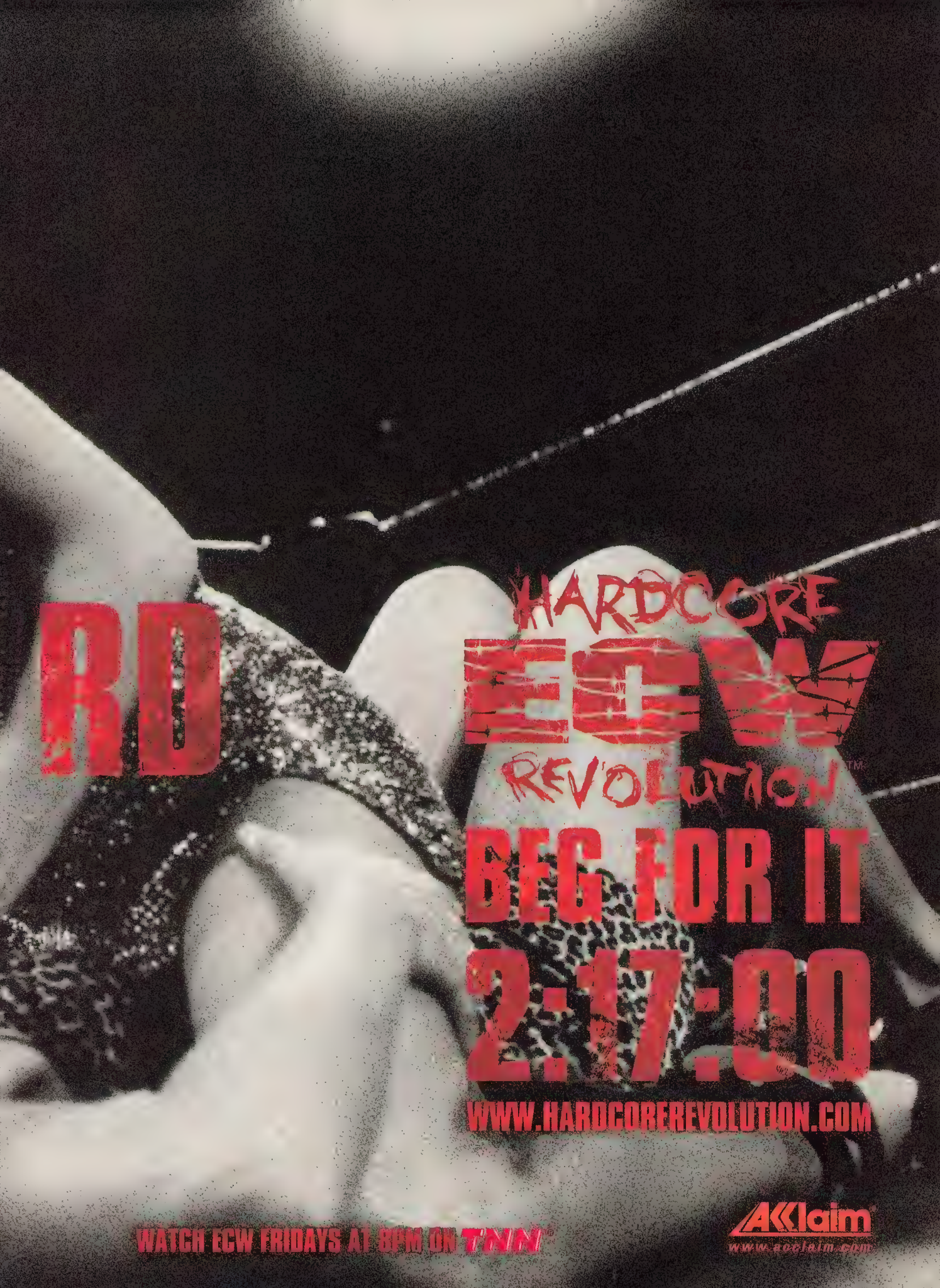
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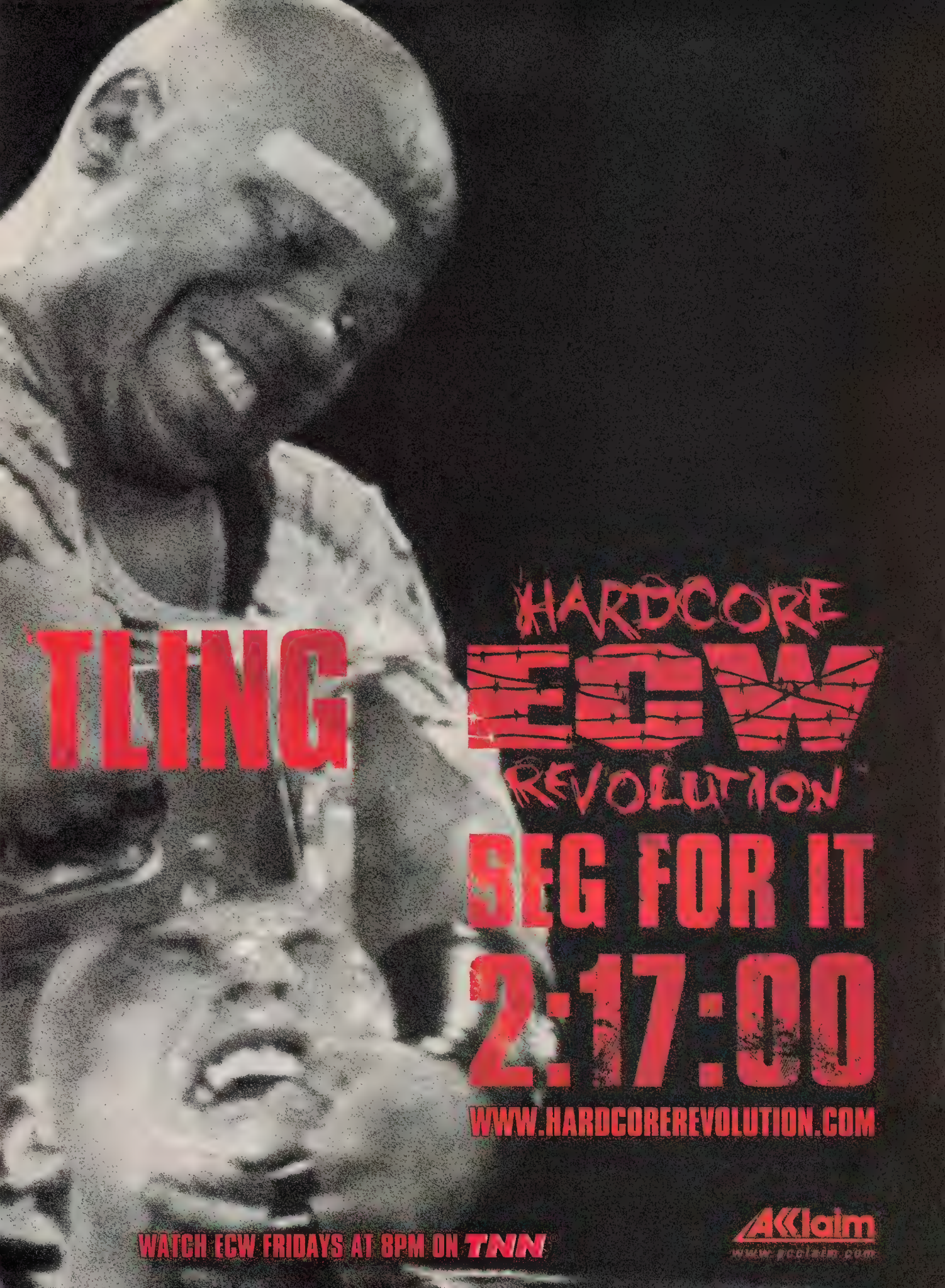
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DEAD OR ALIVE 2

BY DAVE SMITH

THIS IS 3D FIGHTING
AND YES, TECMO'S GIRLS ARE BETTER THAN THEIRS

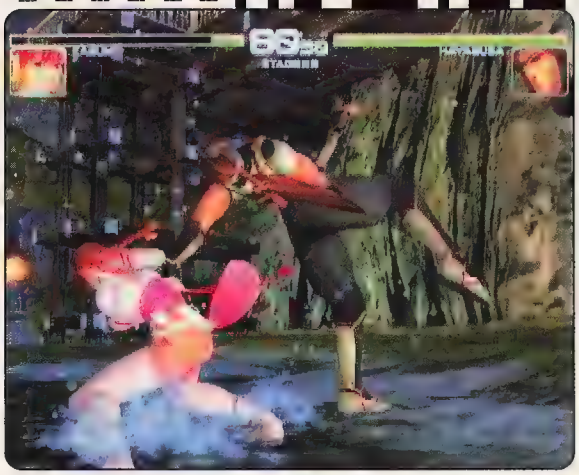
It is strange, the trance one enters during certain games: the state of samadhi, perfect concentration, where you banish thought, descend through the maze of the interface, buttons and directions and combinations, and somehow connect to your avatar on a deeper level.

The mark of a well-made arcade game and, in particular, a well-made fighting game, is the ability to make that connection. If you find a chance to see world-class competition at a first-rate game, I recommend it; you'll see what it is I'm talking about. Watching the video from the Tekken Tag world championships, I understood what had happened when I set my still-standing survival record while on the phone with my mother. That's not just a joke. It's illustrative of the phenomenon: there develops a link between hand and mind that bypasses the latter's conscious portions.

However, I could not, and still cannot, make that same connection with Tekken. Virtua Fighter either, for that matter. VF has the block button, which I've always considered a counterintuitive obstruction; Tekken demands an excess of timing and precision that causes a fearsome train-wreck between my fingers and forebrain. Neither of them has the glass-smooth visual style that so neatly mirrors Dead or Alive's quick, back-and-forth battles. Anything's possible, but so far as I can see, the speed maniac programmers of Team Ninja possess my allegiance in perpetuity.

Not until Dead or Alive 3, at the very outside. Intensive playtesting of Dead or Alive 2 has revealed it to be all that I'd hoped for. Its visual presentation absorbs you like no fighting game yet, drawing you into subtly interactive environments of unparalleled volume. The combat system has a steeper learning curve, demanding greater commitment, but the reward of dedication remains—somewhere, the connection will be made.

At home, or in the arcade, though? Both, in their own way, are conducive to meditation, but Dead or Alive 2 adds a new wrinkle to the question: in bringing the game to the Dreamcast, Tecmo has substantially



modified the game's trademark reversal system. As you probably know, DOA2 replaced the original game's Hold button with the new multipurpose Free button, adding a new layer to the once-simple element of reversing your opponents' attacks. Before, all that was needed to counter a strike was a tap of the Hold button. DOA2, in contrast, required character-specific joystick motions, although skill was rewarded with more powerful reversals, like launchers and combination holds.

Though Tecmo retrieved their cabinet before we could all master this new system, we agreed that it made for a positive change. It gave a healthy edge to experienced players, which from my perspective is as it should be. Tecmo, however, seems to feel otherwise. When we received the DC version a few days later, we found that the reversal system had been simplified. Now it lies between the arcade original and its Model 2 predecessor: the three reversal levels remain (high, middle, and low), but the button commands are simpler, requiring only a single D-pad direction and a tap of the Free button. Thus, the learning curve is smoother, but the pendulum of each fight swings far faster.

Honestly speaking, this change is neither positive nor negative. The arcade is not

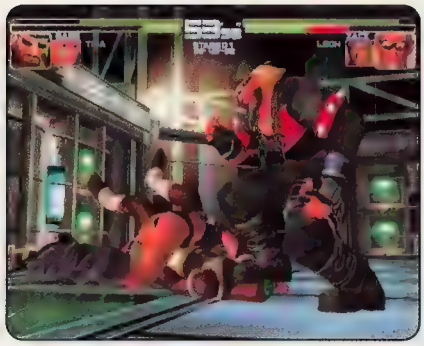
gospel. Dead or Alive 2 has certainly become a different game, but it retains what I enjoyed about the first DOA: speed, fluidity, the excitement of a rapidly seesawing advantage, and naturally, the Japanese Ocean Cyclone.

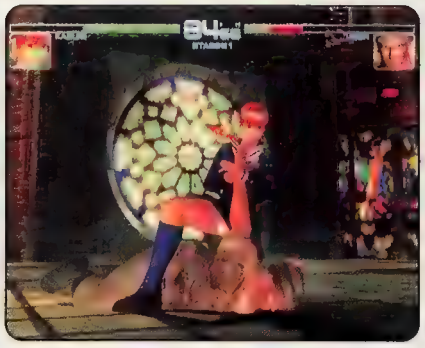
Yes, that's what J. O. stands for, when Tina falls back into a perfect bridge, and her victim meets the concrete from a good eight feet up. Dead or Alive 2 is filled with those kinds of visual moments, when you're thankful to live in this age of technology. The vast majority of them, however, appeal to more than a head full of puroresu trivia. The beauty of nature comes through in more than one arena, where you feel a connection to the environment that no other fighting game has yet conveyed.

Bushido Blade experimented with large, free-roaming stages, but was hampered by its hardware. Soul Calibur's backgrounds amaze, but it still confines you to a neatly bordered ring. DOA2 does what the former could not and the latter would not—introduce combat to a vast, seamless environment. There are edges, but they are realistically presented, and some are gateways to beautiful new areas.

The size of the arenas, furthermore, is only part of their realism. God residing as always in the details, small elements impart a great feeling of connection and presence. The temple arena benefits immeasurably from the effect of splashing water, as combatants step through the small streams that crisscross a mountain plateau. A tranquil arctic scene possesses a lower level of detail, but kicking up puffs of powdery snow again helps you develop a stronger relation with your surroundings. And lest man's own creations fail to receive their due, Helena's opera-house stage sports innumerable background touches, as well as a lovely reflection effect on the brightly polished floor.

The environmental details don't just provide something nice to look at, they can also be found influencing gameplay. On wet or icy footing, fighters can slip



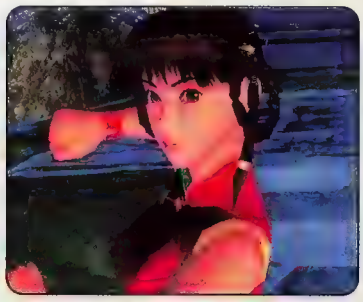


when impacted by strikes, realistically falling to their knees. This can have unpredictable effects: it stuns you, and may leave you vulnerable, but if your opponent is in the middle of a combination, the next strike just might pass harmlessly overhead. In other arenas, the Danger Zone has been resurrected: explosive floors have become explosive walls, whose proximity modifies certain throws and reversals. Pulled off with your back to the wall, Tina's normally harmless hammer throw becomes a fiery Japanese Ocean suplex combination.

Thinking upon these subtle variations of gameplay brings me back to that connection I spoke of. In so many areas, DOA2 is a far more complex game than its predecessor. The reversal system, despite the DC version's regression, requires more careful anticipation and timing, and the Dreamcast control scheme brings one massive advance over the arcade: unlike the arcade controls, which required cumbersome use of the Free button, the analog stick allows effortless omnidirectional movement. A stun system (many attacks briefly stagger an opponent, with realistic accompanying animations) adds another layer of depth to attack and defense. Every character has an expanded move set: old combinations have been lengthened, or broadened with new branches; new strikes have been learned; new throws and holds always convey a powerful impact, thanks to decent collision detection.

The Dreamcast version retains all of this, although it seems to have lost a little in the graphical department. The 30-fps cinematic engine is completely intact, but even judging from an incomplete preview version, some arenas in the fighting game proper have lost touches of geometric and texture detail. A few surfaces are flatter, and some background elements have been lost, although the frame rate remains perfectly constant. Final judgment cannot be cast, but keen-eyed devotees of the arcade version should be prepared to notice the occasional difference; at the very least, you'll wonder why they decided to dye Bass' facial hair.

As I've said, the arcade is not gospel, and though I regret the lost chance at a perfect port, I feel no desire to dwell on it. What drew me to DOA before, and sunk me into nights of intense, dreamlike concentration, remains, and is deepened. The characters, though now texture-mapped (unlike the original's Gouraud-shaded models), retain the smooth, clean look of their 32-bit ancestors, accented by animated details like tassels, skirts, and hanging chains. The expansion and enhancement of the fighting system makes it a more rewarding game to master, and the massive leaps in graphical presentation are just barely marred by a few steps backwards. The console version, perfect or not, provides a perfect opportunity to make the connection, to develop a deeper understanding of a complex game. Turn on your Dreamcast, kill the lights, and enter the survival mode; it has the fewest interruptions. Immerse yourself in the rhythm of hold, strike, reverse, reverse, reverse again. And if your mother calls, no reason to be ashamed: just talk, keep playing, and feel yourself descend even further. **GR**



Though the tag mode confines you to one of the less spectacular arenas, the team-up moves even the score with explosive displays of multiplayer violence.

On January 29, 2000 in Yokohama, Square held the "Square Millennium" press event. Ten thousand people were there to get a first look at Square's future plans. Most attendees probably just expected a new Final Fantasy game, or an announcement of support for the Sega Dreamcast. But There was much more FF than anyone had anticipated, and a massive new program of expansion onto the Internet. Square announced "PlayOnline," a comprehensive network entertainment service that will power online games (including online Final Fantasy), electronic media distribution (movies, music, and more), as well as e-commerce services involving any number of different commodities.

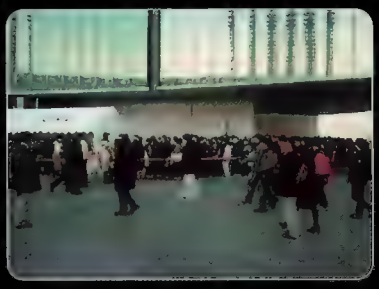
SQUARE MILLENNIUM

BY TATSUKI MIURA

THE DRAMATIC EVOLUTION OF THE GAMING WORLD IN 2001

Square opened their Millennium event with a filmed presentation, launching the first in a series of ambitious announcements. After a digest of sequences from Square's history, the future of gaming unfolded in dramatic fashion. A pair of high-school students chatted and e-mailed each other via their PlayStation 2s—not particularly surprising, given the console's announced Internet capabilities. Then, they joined together for a game of Final Fantasy XI—a revelation, indeed, that Square is creating a full-blown online multiplayer game. Though the gameplay sequences shown were obviously very early concepts (after all, Square has two FFs to finish before XI is released), they were stunning nonetheless, showcasing a massive real-time 3D world. Thwarted in their battle against a massive fire-breathing dragon, the two adventurers were able to phone up a real-life friend to become their ally on-line—not from home, but via a public terminal in an urban arcade.

Online RPGs are as old as the earliest BBS communities, and the concept has lately been touched by the power of modern technical innovation, creating games like Everquest, Diablo, and Ultima Online. Square, however, has the skill and power to create an RPG with unmatched production values, and access points inside and outside the home could create something more than a game, a brief escape from reality. How about an actual alternative to the real world? Well, that's a trifle hyperbolic, but Square is certainly providing vast opportunities for entertainment via one simple system.



PLAYONLINE: E-DISTRIBUTION AND E-COMMERCE

PlayOnline, Square's planned online community, will feature all manner of services to enhance online gaming. E-mail and chatrooms will allow players to communicate in and out of games. If you're alone, you can entertain yourself with cartoons, music, sports updates, and more. Besides distributing information and enabling communication, Square will also develop e-commerce services to sell real goods, using rich 3D graphics for virtual stores. The one potential difficulty is network access. Japan lags far behind the U.S. in the speed and cost of network connections. To tackle this problem, the Nippon Telephone and Telegraph group will be a partner in the PlayOnline enterprise. Given SCEI's announcements concerning the PS2's broadband access potential, it's likely that NTT will help provide a strong network structure and high-speed connections to make PlayOnline possible.

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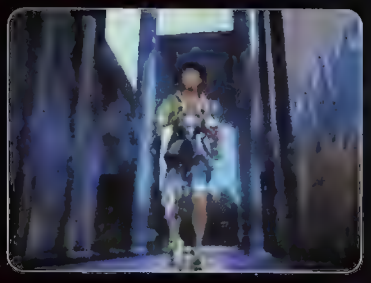
THREE FINAL FANTASY games (IX, X, XI) UNVEILED

THE FANTASY RETURNS ON THE PLAYSTATION: FINAL FANTASY IX - Final Fantasy IX will be released in summer 2000 for the existing PlayStation console. Yoshitaka Amano, the legendary artist and character designer of the first six Final Fantasies, is returning to the series in volume nine, where his delicate, fantastic creations will be realized in 3D, albeit superdeformed 3D, for the first time. As before, the backgrounds are static renders, but like the real-time 3D characters, they've undergone yet another cycle of refinement, becoming more detailed than ever. By all accounts, FFIX is nearly finished, and though it is scheduled for a summer release, in theory it could be shipped at any time. Evidently, Square is attempting to coordinate its release so as to avoid competition with Dragon Quest VII, Enix's next RPG and the most hotly-anticipated game in Japan. DQVII's multiple delays (from winter 1999, to March 2000, and now again to May of this year) have forced corresponding postponements of Final Fantasy. Despite the popularity of RPGs in Japan, it could still be possible to oversaturate the market with two titles of this magnitude.



THE FIRST FF WITH ONLINE POTENTIAL: FINAL FANTASY X - Final Fantasy X, the first FF for the PlayStation 2, will be released in spring 2001. The motif in FFX seems to be bringing players closer to their characters. The lifelike designs are similar to those in Chrono Cross, and the PS2-generated real-time 3D world allows you to follow your party via a tethered third-person view (similar to Zelda 64). FFX will include no online multiplayer game, but it will have network options, such as an online strategy guide. Given the announcement that more than one team is working on the FF series, it seems as if X hearkens back more to FFVIII than its immediate predecessor. The characters bring to mind Tetsuya Nomura's softer, more realistic designs. It's interesting to wonder how fans of the series might react to these stylistic changes.

FINAL FANTASY IS REBORN ONLINE: FINAL FANTASY XI - The Final Fantasy series has mirrored the evolution of the entire computer role-playing concept. Early computer and console RPGs, like the first FFs, drew what they could from their dungeon-crawling tabletop inspirations, with an emphasis on combative, number-driven gameplay over story and character interaction. As time passed, though, pen-and-paper games evolved in an even more character-driven direction, and coincidentally or otherwise, computer games followed suit: who can forget their first experience with the cast of Final Fantasy IV? But a computer-driven game can't possess the same significance as an experience shared by friends, and at the same time, a tabletop game has none of the visual impact that modern consoles make possible. Final Fantasy XI, the first online multiplayer Final Fantasy, will take the strengths of both RPG traditions and mold them into one inimitable experience—a glorious PS2-generated world populated by as many personalities as the real world around us.

Final Fantasy is being reborn online. Online games open doors for a new kind of communication, where players can interact with other people on an equal footing, regardless of their real-life situations, and if Square's demonstration movies are any indication at all, Final Fantasy XI will provide a wonderful backdrop for meetings, partings, and friendships.

Like FFX, the entire world and every inhabitant therein will be rendered in real-time 3D, and the camera will move from its heretofore fixed location, dropping behind characters to follow them in game sequences, and moving freely in stunning real-time cinemas, which showcased Meteor strikes, gigantic dragons, and many other trappings of classic FF rendered with an unprecedented level of detail. FFXI remains many months away, but we can already feel its implications for the future of gaming. As you might guess, we can't wait.

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OTHER GAMES IN THE CONVENTION CENTER

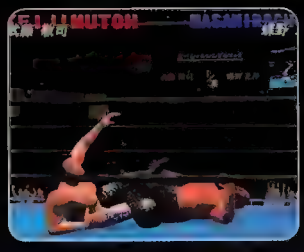
Past the furor surrounding Final Fantasy, Square's many other PS and PS2 games drew crowds as well. Type-S, their PS2 GT racer, looked great, with real-life courses and detailed interiors in the Driver's Eye mode. The details of the racetrack were all there—light, grit, heat-haze, reflections, even shadows accurately calculated in real time from light sources. All the licensed cars (including Japan's major automakers, and potentially other makes) could be modified according to accurate physics parameters, and changes in performance were very noticeable. Control was a little slippery, but it can be fixed in the meantime.

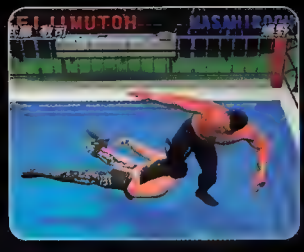
Gekikukan Pro-Baseball we praise without reservations: the PS2-rendered ballplayers look alive, and each plays with a unique style. Stadiums are equally realistic, down to licensed billboards, and the camera provides a smooth, TV-like presentation. The Bouncer moves seamlessly from scene to scene—the action never lets you go. But if you're looking for slightly more (less?) realistic battles, All-Star Pro Wrestling presents the sport in greater detail than we've ever seen. With all this and more, it once again looks like Square will continue their dominance in 2000.

GEKIKUKAN PRO-BASEBALL

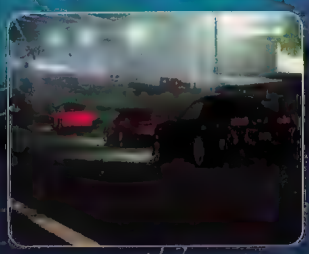
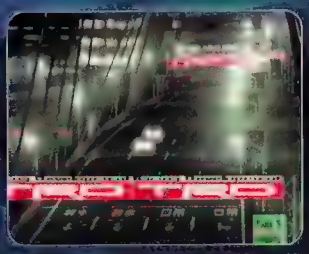
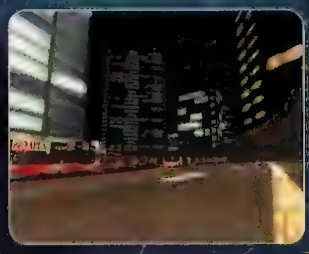
THE BOUNCER

ALL STAR PRO-WRESTLING





TYPE-S

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R

ETERNAL RING

BY TATSUHI MIURA

High adventure and elemental magic in a three-dimensional world.

From Software's first step into the realm of the fantastic

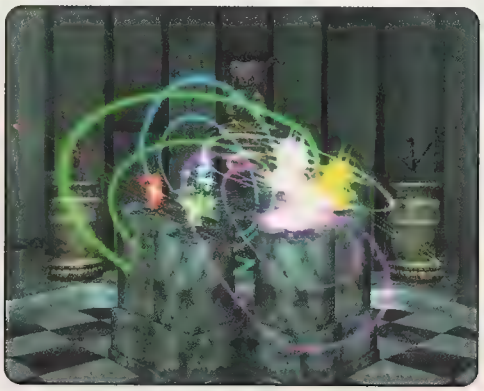
With its stunning use of polygonal graphics, Eternal Ring resoundingly represents From Software's visual prowess in the first RPG title for the PlayStation 2. So striking is the look of the game—it's as if you are watching FMV—players will no doubt be transported to another world.

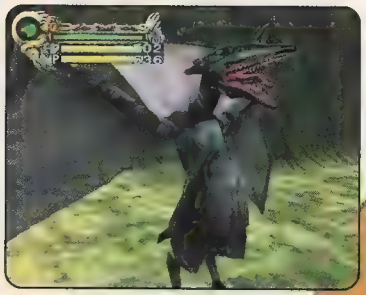
But unfortunately, the basic plot of Eternal Ring is somewhat mundane: Cain, the hero, is charged with investigating a group of knights sent by a statesman to research the so-called Island of No Return. Upon arriving, Cain discovers the power of eight magic rings as well as the exigency of defeating the eight dragons that rule the island.

Battles are conducted through the exchange of magic, channeled by using elemental rings: Flame, Water, Light, Dark, Thunder, Ice, Wind, and Earth. By combining the elemental rings, you will be able to increase their magic power. However, you cannot use any magic in the beginning of the game, having but a sword in the early stages. As you advance through, you start finding numerous rings that can be brought to bear.

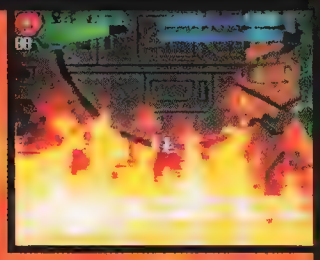
During the course of adventure, you can acquire more than 100 rings, and these are divided into two categories: magic and supplement. Magic rings are for casting magic, and supplement rings serve two different purposes: one for altering the attributes of other rings, and the other for changing the effects of each magic ring. You can have five magic rings and five supplement rings at one time, and during battle, you use the five different magics alternatively in real time.

Games released from From Software have all been polygon-based, and that familiarity with 3D game design is quite evident in Eternal Ring. And as the first From game that explores magic as a theme, Eternal Ring should showcase a different aspect of From's creativity. **GR**

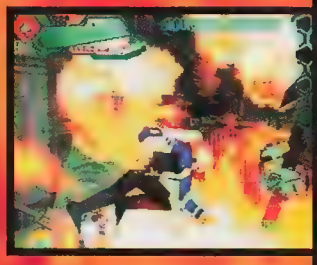




It's more than run and gun. It's blow and go. Evil super battle ship Dante has been dispatched to blow up the planet. You've been dispatched to stop it. After all, that's what you've been genetically engineered for. Armed with napalm, gravity, fire and paralyzer bombs, you're the only thing standing between her and total destruction of an entire race. With 26 explosive missions, it's action so intense you won't be able to tear yourself away. Bathroom? Maybe next year.



NAPALM BOMBS. GRAVITY BOMBS. PARALYZER BOMBS. FIRE BOMBS. THIS GAME REALLY BLOWS.



Silent Bomber

PlayStation

BANDAI

RATING PENDING RP

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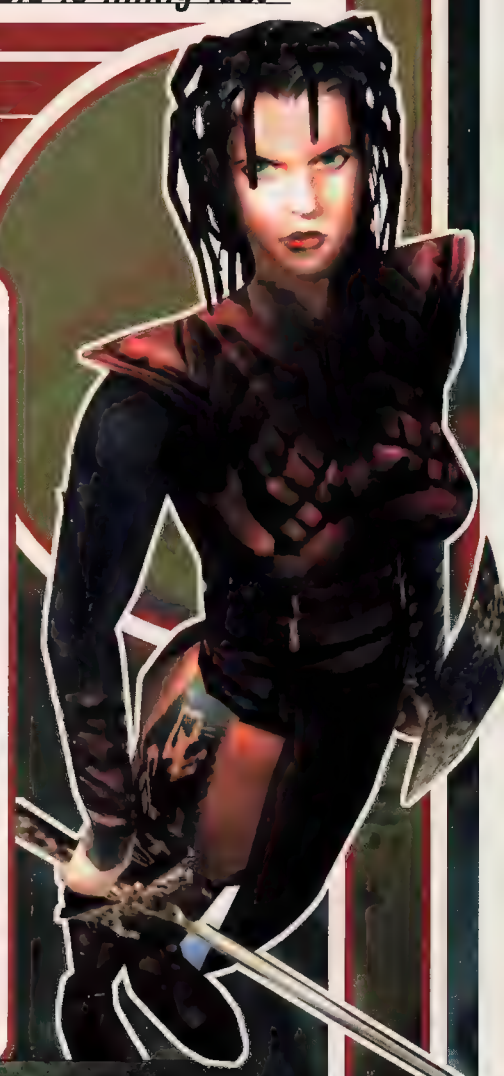
DRACONUS

BY DAVE HALVERSON

Treyarch gets medieval on your ass...
The Dreamcast adventure void is filling fast



Although the version used for this update was quite buggy, Treyarch's Draconus: Dragon's Blood, shows promise. The game's at a critical juncture where the team can take the time to tweak it just right, or rush through the final development stages to make a targeted date. This is where developer and publisher often collide...and money wins. Let's hope it's a non-issue in this case. Current problem areas include soft collision, cumbersome and somewhat spongy controls, muddy jumping, frame-rate issues, and some questionable AI routines. When outdoors, the game's geometry comes into question as well, although this seems to be due to the system's polygon processing power. All of the peaks and valleys come to straight points: nothing is rounded, so hilly areas look distinctly fabricated. Things improve dramatically, however, once the action moves indoors with rich textures and spectacular architecture. Also in the plus column, the game's overall design and structure, ambience, and environments are all looking splendid. The story's assorted impious enemies like orcs, goblins, horned demons and the like, exhibit exquisite detail.

While Draconus' gameplay consists of fairly familiar tasks—finding keys, searching out conquests and slaying enemies—it does so in a D&D vein, with an emphasis on dark themes, raucously wicked enemies, and a distinctive medieval aura. This adds up to a man-style adventure overflowing with clanking swords, dank keeps, and all of the other assorted goodness associated with vanquishing ancient evil. Along those lines, the narrator from the Kain series brings much to the table in terms of storytelling while the in-game voice actors are a mixed bag, ranging from good to poor.

If all goes well in the final stages of Draconus' development, Dreamcast owners will be privy to yet another first-class action/adventure as it joins the ranks of games like Kain, Shadow Man, MDK 2, and soon Tomb Raider TLR and Fur Fighters. Q2 should be a good one. **GR**

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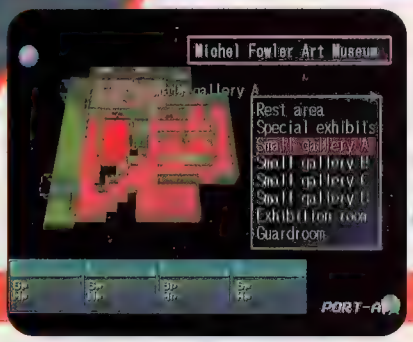
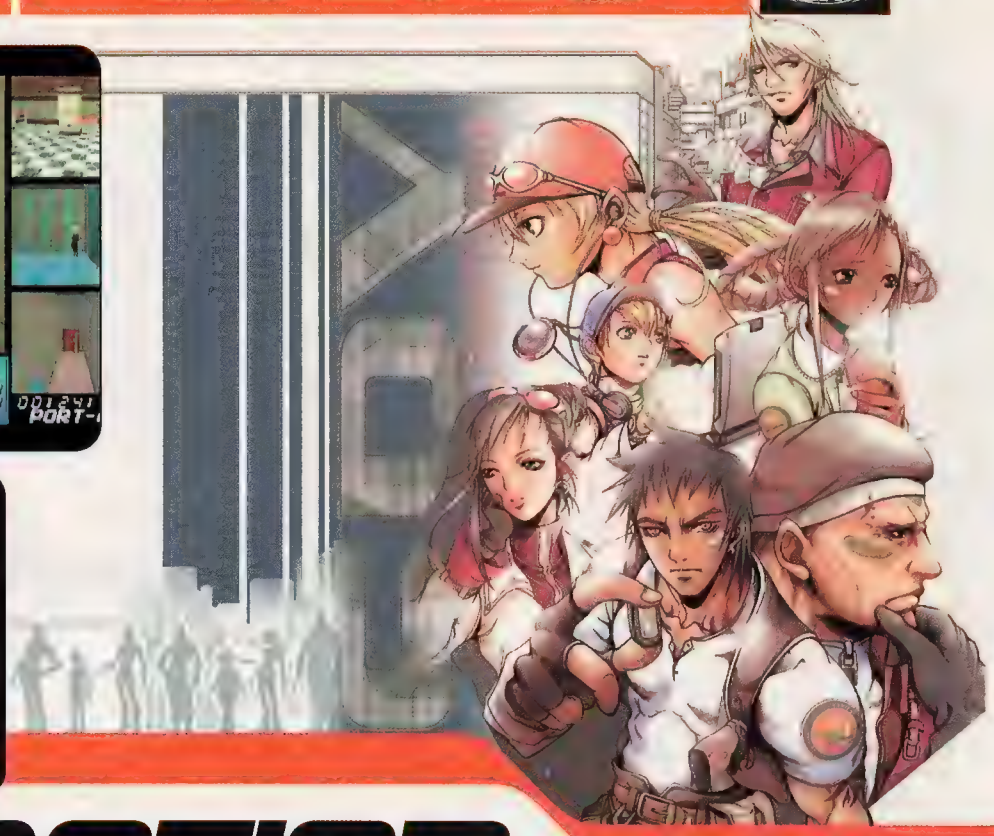




OPERATION ESPIONAGE

INDUSTRIAL-SPY

BY TOM STRATTON

I spy with my little eye...something new for DC owners.

You are Charlie, but these ain't no angels.

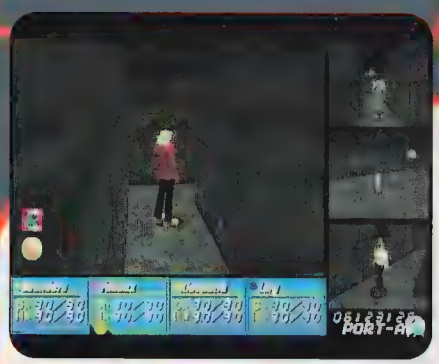
Even if this game only finds a niche audience, it's nice to see more of what Japan has to offer being considered for release here. NEC Home Electronic's I-Spy, with character designs by Kazuo Miyamura, is a perfect example. The game is somewhat unique, in that you command a group of industrial spies. At the helm, you will delegate commands that range from hacking, taking out enemies, avoiding traps, and instructing stealth operations.

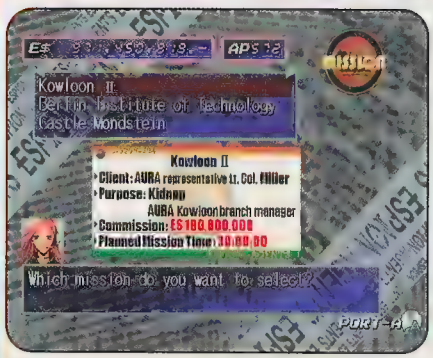
At the beginning of each level, you call upon the four members you hope to complete the objective with. There are seven in all, but I didn't experience any trouble continually picking the same four characters. Hopefully, later in the game it will become necessary to pick particular agents to carry out a specific objective.

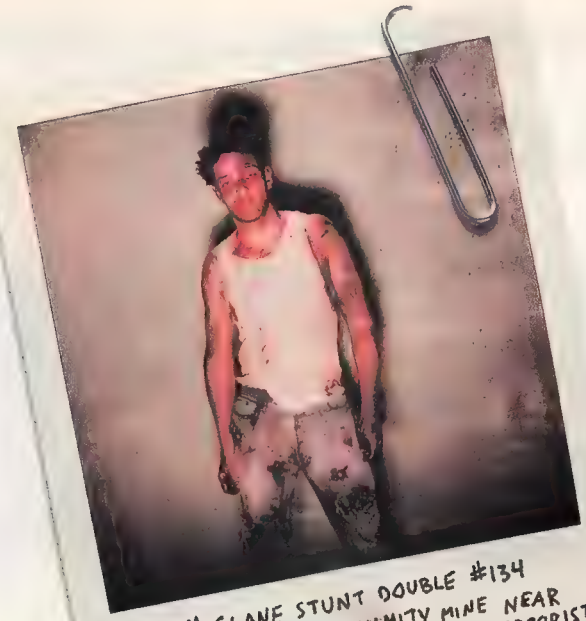
The game screen serves as a network of cameras locked on each of the four spies. A main screen serves as the command window, while three smaller screens stretch along the right side of the display. Quickly swapping out different areas becomes key, since each of the levels has a time limit in which to finish.

This method of control proves to be awkward at times and inadvertently displays some of the AI holes. Many times, your spy will run right past a guard with neither of them engaging the other. Also, when trying to locate terminals, your (ahem) highly intelligent spy will opt to take the shortest route. Problem is, most of the time the path is crippled by locked doors, resulting in your spy standing aimlessly in front of the door to await further commands.

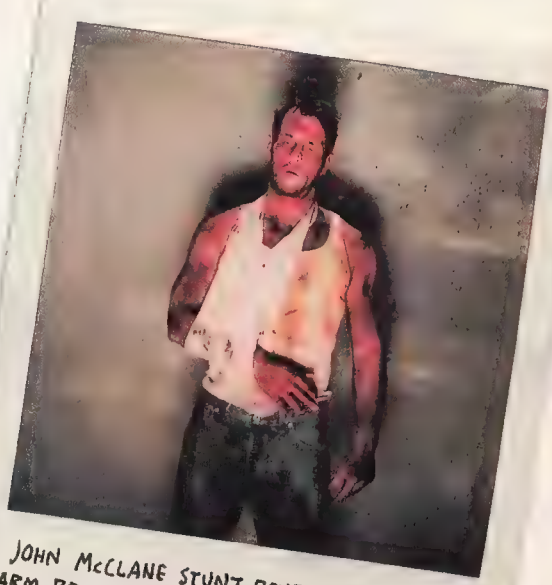
Unfortunately, the visual presentation in I-Spy isn't what one has become accustomed to on the Dreamcast. The line art is great; the 3D counterparts are not. Locations are uninspired and barren and the music does not give the cloak and dagger-type flavor one would hope for. But if the characters are fleshed out and properly balanced, I-Spy will attract gamers looking for something a bit different on DC. GR







JOHN McCLANE STUNT DOUBLE #134
-STEPPED ON PROXIMITY MINE NEAR ROULETTE TABLE WHILE BATTLING TERRORISTS.



JOHN McCLANE STUNT DOUBLE #56
-ARM BROKEN NEAR SLOT MACHINES IN SHARPSHOOTERS DUEL WITH A RUSSIAN TERRORIST.

JOHN McCLANE STUNT DOUBLE #18
-HEADWOUND FROM HIGH SPEED WRECK WHILE ATTEMPTING EXTREME DRIVING DOWN VEGAS STRIP.

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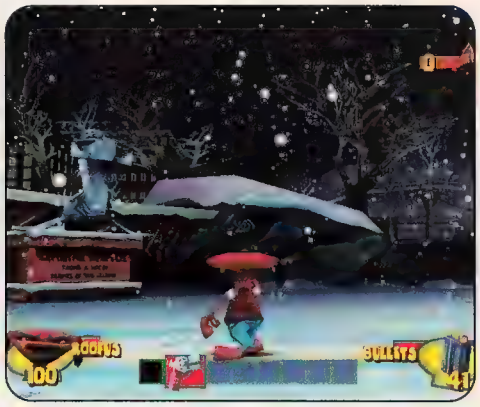
FUR FIGHTERS

BY DAVE HALVERSON

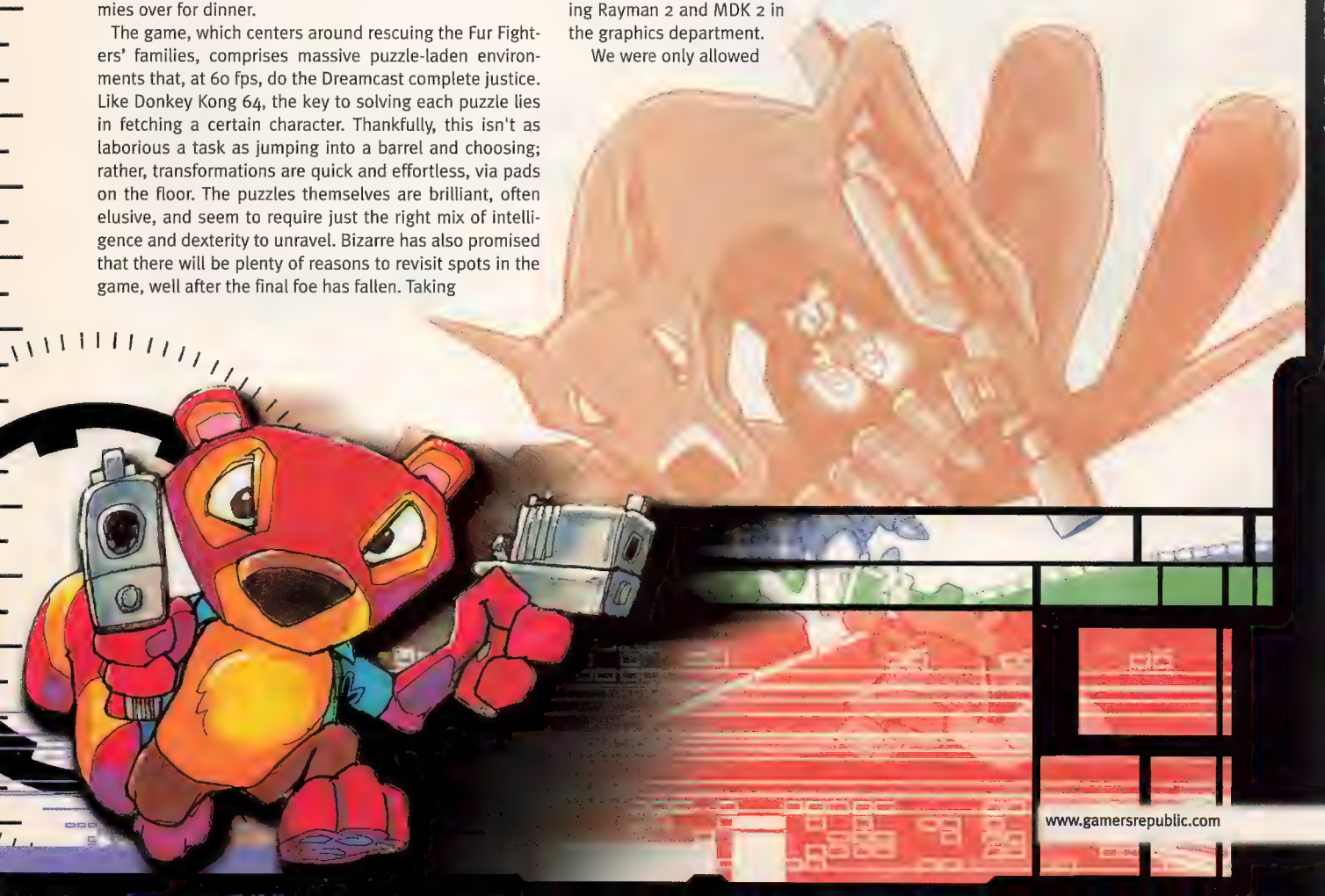


They may look all sweet and cuddly, but this band of cute little critters will pop a man-sized cap in your ass...

As one who speaks often of "critter games," I must admit that seldom has that billing fit as well as it does with Bizarre Creation's Fur Fighters. What looks all cute and fuzzy-wuzzy on the outside masks a game that makes Quake seem humanitarian. Perhaps it's the fact that you're blowing the heads off of such cute fodder that makes Fur Fighters so, so wonderfully violent—a blatant F-you to the anti-violence establishment. It's like dressing up Hannibal Lechter as the butler and inviting your enemies over for dinner.

The game, which centers around rescuing the Fur Fighters' families, comprises massive puzzle-laden environments that, at 60 fps, do the Dreamcast complete justice. Like Donkey Kong 64, the key to solving each puzzle lies in fetching a certain character. Thankfully, this isn't as laborious a task as jumping into a barrel and choosing; rather, transformations are quick and effortless, via pads on the floor. The puzzles themselves are brilliant, often elusive, and seem to require just the right mix of intelligence and dexterity to unravel. Bizarre has also promised that there will be plenty of reasons to revisit spots in the game, well after the final foe has fallen. Taking the DK 64 reference a step further, they have also integrated a nice quiver of mini-games. Where they've got DK 64 beat, however, besides the obvious visual differences, is in execution, level design, and subject matter. Fur fighters doesn't have near the platforming elements of DK, but rather a mean focus on shooting. This game is insolently funny and at the same time it's a technical marvel. From real-time footprints to the lighting and weather effects, this is easily one of the best-looking games around, rivaling Rayman 2 and MDK 2 in the graphics department.

We were only allowed



a half hour or so with Fur Fighters, and it was enough to convince everyone present that this could be the Dreamcast's first really big future franchise. Bizarre Creations has spared no expense in the creation of the game and are obviously taking their time to ensure that it is spoken of in the same breath as the aforementioned monkey romp, Banjo Kazooie, and Super Mario 64. At the end of the day it's all about little critters with big-ass guns, and as a premise it just doesn't get much better. To give you an idea of the lay of the land, consider the characters themselves: Roofus the Hound, Chang the Firefox, Juliette the Cat, Rico the Penguin, Bungalow the Kangaroo, and Tweak the Dragonette. Each utilize obvious attributes that will come into play as the game unfurls. After ECTS everyone had a good feeling about Fur Fighters but now that the cat (and the rest of them) is all the way out of the bag we're downright excited for this one. With any luck we'll have a playable version for the next issue. Acclaim plans on having the game out in May. **GR**

NIGHTMARE CREATURES

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Has the almighty PlayStation finally reached its limit? Kalisto says no way, proving that there's still life left

I am a big supporter of games that require you to decapitate, dismember, mutilate, and butcher large monsters—preferably with a chainsaw or axe, like in Nightmare Creatures II. So when I accuse the minds of Kalisto as being warped and twisted, I do so with the utmost reverence and respect.

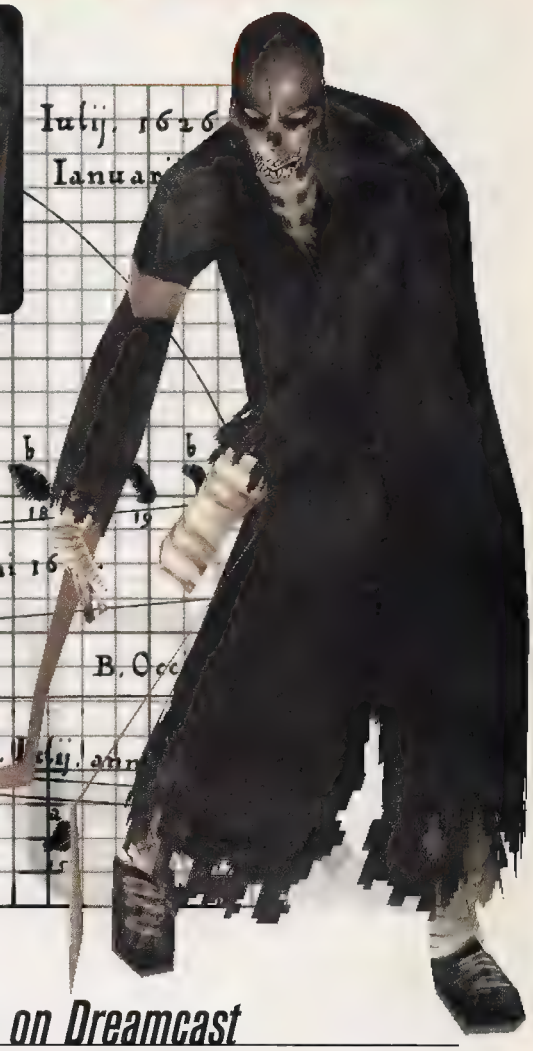
Kalisto obviously has a penchant for the macabre, a thirst for moody settings of dread and despair. Inspired by graphic novels and their distinct, darkly compelling artwork, the creators of Nightmare Creatures II are going to extreme lengths to bring the pages of their inspirations to horrific life—to create their own story of horror, one that is interactive.

At the center of Kalisto's vision of terror is Herbert Wallace, a deranged Englishman who slowly loses his sanity while descending into the shadowy depths of the occult. On a mission for his cabal, Wallace discovers that a branch of the Brotherhood of Hectate has resurrected the wicked Dr. Albert Crowley, villain in the original Nightmare Creatures. Captured and locked away in the underbelly of Dr. Crowley's hospital, experimented on and tortured for 20 years of his life, Wallace eventually escapes and is later found wandering the backstreets of London. In a psychotic state, he is placed in a mental institution, where his mind deteriorates even further by a murderous hunger for vengeance.

It is in this hospital where the game begins. Once outside the oppressive walls of the asylum, you enter the impenetrable gloom of the rain-soaked streets of London, moving through alleyways, swimming in sewers, scaling the rooftops. As your quest to find Dr. Crowley deepens, the action moves outside of this early-1900s city and into other such gothic wastelands as Paris and Prague.

More of an adventure than the first game, Nightmare

gamer republic.com



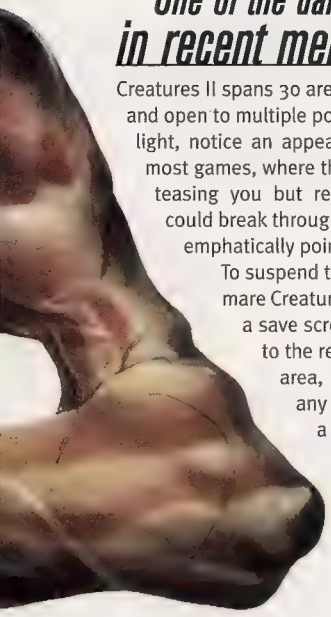
One of the darkest and most violent action horror titles in recent memory finds an accommodating home on Dreamcast

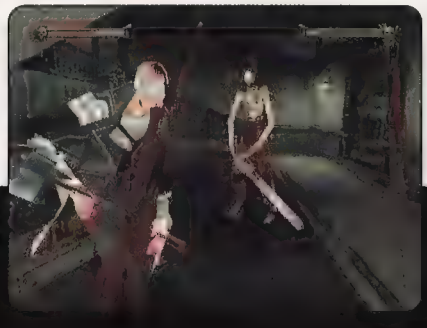
Creatures II spans 30 areas within eight worlds, which are all enormous and open to multiple points of exploration. You may come across a sky light, notice an appealing setting waiting underneath, and—unlike most games, where the image would be a fixture in the background, teasing you but restricting you from further examination—you could break through and open an entirely new area. And as Kalisto emphatically points out: "There's no backtracking!"

To suspend the illusion of existing in an actual world, Nightmare Creatures II never perceptibly loads, and there is never a save screen to stare at. Not once will you be tipped off to the reality outside the game. When moving to a new area, real-time cutscenes introduce the change, and any engaging event will always be accompanied by a rapid-fire cinematic, all of which are amazingly produced: there is a rain effect early in the game that is virtually tangible in its realism.

I have yet to play the Dreamcast version of Nightmare Creatures II, but from what I've seen in the demo, the game is, like most PS-to-DC conversions, higher-res, smoother, and cleaner. For all its technical accomplishments—this game breaks new ground on PS—perhaps the most striking quality of this genuinely unnerving game is its superb sense of horror design and atmosphere, with extraordinary monsters scuttling through the dread. The decaying Wallace himself is a dark wonder, wrapped in tattered bandages to contain his crumbling flesh.

He is madness incarnate. And, yes, he is a twisted freak of a creation. When the game switches from exploration mode to action mode, Wallace automatically squares up to his victim, circling around for the kill. Strike a beast enough times with any number of weapons, and it will drop to its knees in submission, open to a graphic fatality. Even if, say, a monster's head is sliced off, blood and flesh splattering on the walls, Wallace will continue to dismember the body in a fit of rage. Warped and twisted indeed. **GR**





Blood, flesh, death, sorcery and darkness: the Nightmare Creature recipe for success.

DEUCE

BY TOM STRATTON

Jokers' Wild, Crazy Eight's, War...they're all here, ready to double-down.

He may be the lowest suit, but Deuce has more heart than any other

Recently we were paid a visit by our friends at Midway, and among the titles shown was a videotape with the word "Deuce" on the label. Hungry for unheard-of titles and eager to see the footage, we huddled around the TV screen. And what we saw was an impressive surprise. There is no simple way of explaining the game, since the concept is multi-faceted: basically, it is a 3D-adventure game, with inventive characters, a great storyline, and solid gameplay.

In a medieval world of inhabitants made up of a deck of cards and ruled by the Royal Families of the Four Suits, Deuce must restore harmony among the land. You see, the Jack of Spades of the Spade Kingdom has captured the Royal Flush of Hearts. Even worse, he has eliminated the Ten of Hearts, a crucial member of the Royal Flush. Without the Ten of Hearts and the remaining Royal members of the Heart suit, the Jack of Spades will corrupt the land and become the eternal ruler.

The only would-be hero to rise to the occasion is a new recruit in the Heart Army, a distant relative of the Royal family named Deuce, the Two of Hearts. Only he has the birthright that will allow him to take the place of the aforementioned Ten of Hearts, free the other Royals, and defeat Jack. There is a lot more under the surface of the story, including allies, a love interest, and environment effects that will help or hinder Deuce from completing his quest.

The world is lush and highly detailed. Great real-time lighting, accurate water effects, and other ambient animations provide the sense of a virtual existence. The combination of action, adventure, tragedy, comedy and puzzles is the ideal recipe for universal appeal and appreciation.

Point of View has taken considerable time in the planning of the game. Scheduled for November, Deuce will push the dated PlayStation hardware and introduce technical achievements some thought impossible. And when's the last time you played a game where the hero was a playing card? GR

Deuce pushes some great visuals. Here you see some of the ambient lighting effects found throughout the game.

A TALK WITH P.O.V.

To get a better and first-hand look at the game, we stopped by the Point of View offices here in Southern California to see what people can expect come Thanksgiving time this year. Much thanks to both Midway and P.O.V. for their time and efforts.

GR: Just by looking at these design documents, it appears you have been refining this game for quite awhile.
P.O.V.: Definitely. At this point there has been about 10 months of production, but the conceptual design has been years.

GR: The game looks like it is really working the PlayStation hardware. Have there been any concepts that work on paper, but tax the system once integrated?
P.O.V.: Well, we are now working on our fourth-generation PlayStation titles, and this game definitely pushes the edges of the system hardware. We are implementing multiple light sources, we are drawing more polygons than most PlayStation games are, and we are running in hi-res.

GR: The action moves nice and smooth.
P.O.V.: Our target frame rate is 30. We find that locking it there keeps the game responsive and the visual integrity crisp. Anything lower would stunt the action and feel unresponsive.

GR: The environments stretch fairly long. Are you streaming the level data?
P.O.V.: Definitely. Polys are constantly being dropped or added as the camera swings or the player moves. Lots of PlayStation games are path-driven and are constrained, and it's nice to be able to march around a huge area without switching in and out of load screens. A lot of developers are using Red Book audio, streaming the music, and it makes the game sound good, but the levels are generally small, with less geometry.

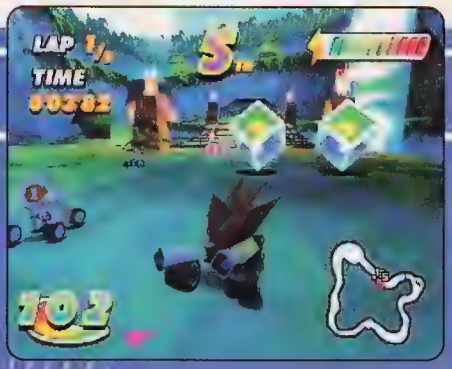
GR: Are you using any game script or tools used from previous games you've developed?
P.O.V.: We are taking advantage of some of the tools we used for Ready to Rumble and Sports Car GT, like rendering tools. We create many of our own tools, and one of our main programmers built a custom plug-in for 3D Studio Max that allows us to do nearly everything Max. They can flag polygons, tag them to be transparent, collidable or not collidable.

GR: I can't help but make a lightweight comparison between this game and some of the stuff going on in Alice in Wonderland.
P.O.V.: There is a bit of homage to Alice. Also, in the respect that like Alice in Wonderland, Deuce is a great fantasy world that is full of life, and in that sense it inspired us. From the beginning we understood that one of the correlations people would make is that the characters in Deuce are playing cards like in Alice. We made sure to aim away from things that happen in Alice.

GR: Who did the score?
P.O.V.: Tommy Talarico, and what he's done is incredible. He is great to work with too. Any minor changes we have asked him to make down the line, he adjusts and whips them out.

GR: It's a shame that all of these creative and progressive ideas are being confined to the PlayStation.
P.O.V.: Well, right now it is PlayStation only. But, you never know. We'll wear long sleeves one day and have something up them.

GR: Thanks for all of the hospitality and insight to how you create your games.
P.O.V.: Thanks for stopping by and giving us feedback to what we are creating.



SPEED PUNKS

BY MIKE HOBBS

Funcom has a lot to live up to with Speed Punks. Will the PlayStation host another great kart racer?

Shigeru Miyamoto made a far more revolutionary game in the first Mario Kart than anyone could have ever guessed at the time. Surely it was recognized as a brilliant use of Mode 7 and one of the best multiplayer games on the SNES, but could anyone have predicted that Miyamoto's little kart racer would still be an object of study for modern developers? The latest result of this scrutiny is Speed Punks, a smashing-looking new kart racer coming in April from European developers Funcom.

Like the magnificent Crash Team Racing which came before it, Speed Punks is a visually dazzling game. With an engine just shy of being as clever as the one Naughty Dog cooked up for CTR, Speed Punks nevertheless impresses with its bright, appealing colors and imaginatively rendered racing environments. There are visual delights around seemingly every corner: the gleaming metropolis of the Ridge Racer-inspired Gold City; the whooshing roller coasters of Millennium Park; the cool, moonlit gloom of Moonlight Cove. But there's more to the tracks than looks alone, as careful design is evident in the course layouts and placement of turbo boosts, ensuring very exciting laps.

With weapons and cheap AI tendencies lifted straight out of Mario Kart 64 or Crash Team Racing, it's a bit of a quandary then why Funcom didn't bother to borrow a page from either game's theory on powersliding. In short, Speed Punks lacks a multi-stage powerslide/boost mechanism: i.e., the colored letters coming out the back of the karts in MK64 or the turbo boosts of CTR. Speed Punks manages with a simple oversteer command that, while effective and technically sound, simply can't compete with the addictiveness of the other games' systems.

Even with this minor complaint, Speed Punks is shaping up to be a fantastic game of kart racing. With its great visuals, solid gameplay, and four-player support, it's in little danger of becoming an also ran next to Crash Team Racing. Look for the final verdict next month. GR

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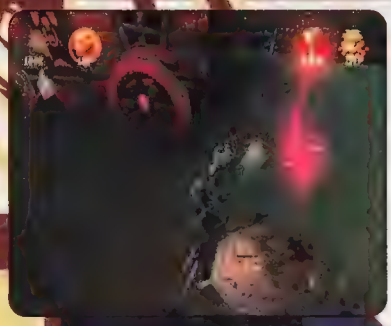
developer: scee • publisher: scea • available: april

MEDIEVIL 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON



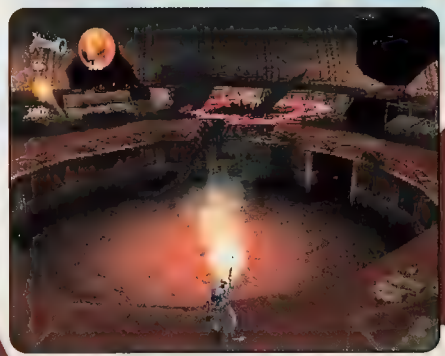
The evil Lord Palethorne has discovered Zarok's spell book. Sir Dan...rise from your grave!

Games like SCEE's MediEvil 2 are a rare commodity, existing on a sparsely populated plane with the most elite adventure games. Only a handful emerge annually, but if they were all we ever got to play, we'd be happy—perhaps happier than having a dozen or more a month laid out in front of us, as is the current state of gaming.

Voted as our runner up for game of the year in 1998, MediEvil was the first truly spectacular fantastical free-roaming action/adventure for the PlayStation, and the sequel, I'm happy to report, not only lives up to, but will likely surpass, the majesty of the original.

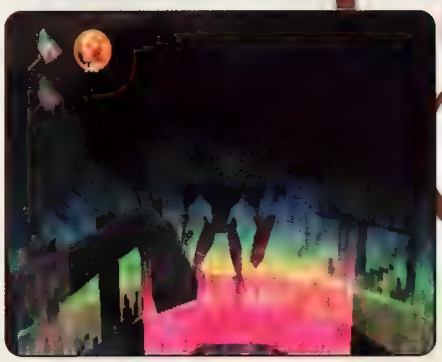
Of course, taking center stage in the production is the unlikeliest of undead heroes, Sir Dan Fortesque. Having defeated the evil sorcerer Zarok, Sir Dan winds up on display in a posh museum (so he's moving up in the world—well, he's above ground at least) where he is awakened once again to save the land from peril. He killed Zarok, but his spell book passed on, and has fallen into the hands of the evil occultist Lord Palethorne, who has unleashed a spell upon the land creating mass evil and all of its by-products.

Faced with the challenge of improving on near perfection, the MediEvil team has come up with a wealth of gameplay additions to make MediEvil 2 all it can be, while at the same time adhering to the game's brilliant haunted themes, whimsical classical overtures, and feather-weight play con-



trol. Dan feels exactly as he did the first time out: light as air (he's all bone after all) and a joy to control. Now there's just more (or less depending on how you look at it) of him to love. Besides Dan, you'll play as Dan's hand, Headless Dan (you have to be there) and Dan-kenstein. You'll also hook up with a blue-skinned hotty (Dan's deceased love interest) and the mad professor, who revives and sends Dan on his quests. The mad professor's lab replaces the original's Hall of Heroes. But not to worry, it has as much, no, more, charm. The levels themselves, which are now even more laden with puzzles, character interaction and mini-games, are still pure Burtonesque goth (with a little twisted humor thrown in for good measure) accompanied by another stellar Danny Elfman-like score. In other words, it's all very, very good. The architecture is spectacular, the textures are rich, and the design—superb. These guys have mad skills, there's just no two ways about it.

My initial impressions are that the beginning areas MediEvil 2 are better than the latter levels in the last, so I can only imagine how fantastic the game will be when it's final. If you have never played MediEvil, now's the perfect time have at it, right before this worthy sequel. Of course, if you've already braved Zarok's minions, prepare yourself for the same team's ultimate vision and one of the last great romps before (gulp) PS2! GR



SYPHON FILTER 2

BY MICHAEL PUCCINI

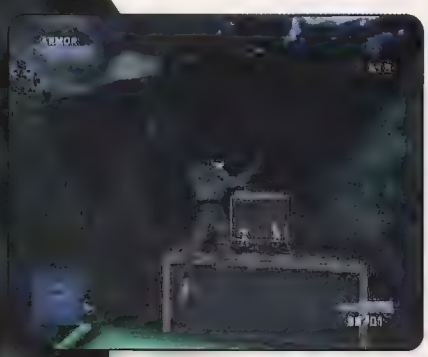
A compelling sequel to the highly acclaimed action espionage game from 989 studios

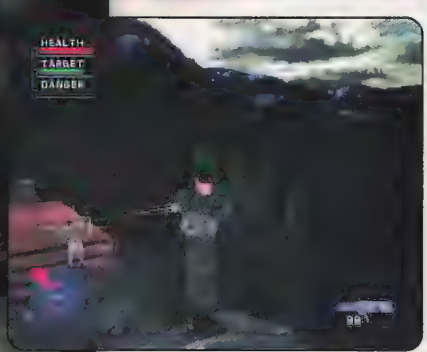
One of the risks of making a brilliant, highly acclaimed, million-unit selling game—as 989 Studios/Eidetic did last year with the first Syphon Filter—is that it sets lofty expectations for any follow-up title. The first game boasted a solid, well-rounded mix of stealthy, espionage-based gameplay, story, graphics, sound, control, character development and challenge, with some nice FMV scenes linking everything together. Based on playing a somewhat early preview version of Syphon Filter 2, the sequel looks to not only improve on the aforementioned aspects, but, with the addition of significant gameplay elements, to tower over its predecessor.

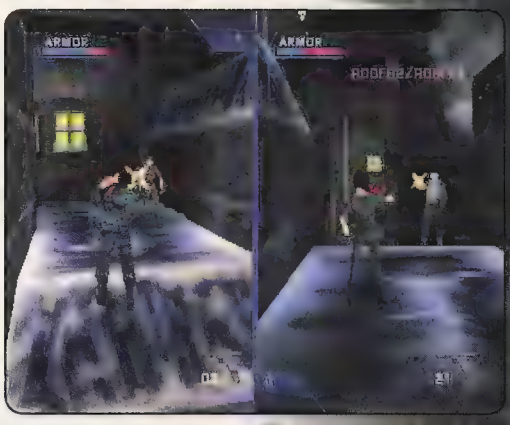
The first sign of change is that the new title is being released on two discs, compared to the previous coming in on a single CD. Three of the more notable new features and enhancements in SF2 are: the ability to play as both secret agent Gabriel Logan and his previously unplayable cohort Lian Xing, which adds a fresh, dual storyline depth; the ability to save gameplay progress at various checkpoints within each stage; and the addition of a two-player, split-screen deathmatch mode.

The graphics have also been given a visual tune-up, especially in the FMV department. The cutscenes look gorgeous, with impressive lighting effects. Of note is a provocative cinema near the beginning of the game that features a montage of Lian changing clothes in the shadows—right down to her skivvies. The in-game graphics also show a marked improvement. A plane-crash stage is highlighted by a brilliant fire blazing all around in the background.

Not only does SF2's government agency storyline pick up hours after the first left off, but it also includes a real-world, modern-day flavor, specifically with the tensions between the U.S. and China: the intro says that there are "sensitive U.S. technologies to be sold to a dissident group (in China)."







SF2 is spread out across 20 different levels—eight played as Lian—and the variety of weapons found and used in each does not disappoint. There are a slew of new and returning weapons to use, including a bowie knife—for those close-up, silent encounters—a crossbow, two different sniper guns, a flame thrower, the tazer—for stealthy missions where keeping soldiers alive is imperative—and a night-vision rifle.

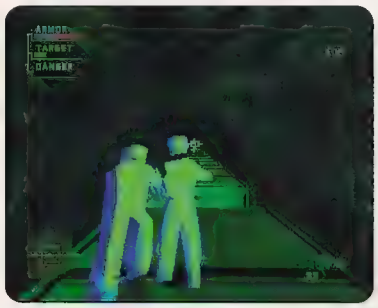
As should be expected, the sequel includes the lock-on, auto-targeting mechanism that was so popular in the first game. There is also a manual targeting mechanism, as well as a straight run-and-gun option. The proficient use of all three styles of firing will come in handy, as there are enemies that will not be affected by the auto-targeting because it only hits the flak jacket, so a manual targeting of the head is necessary.

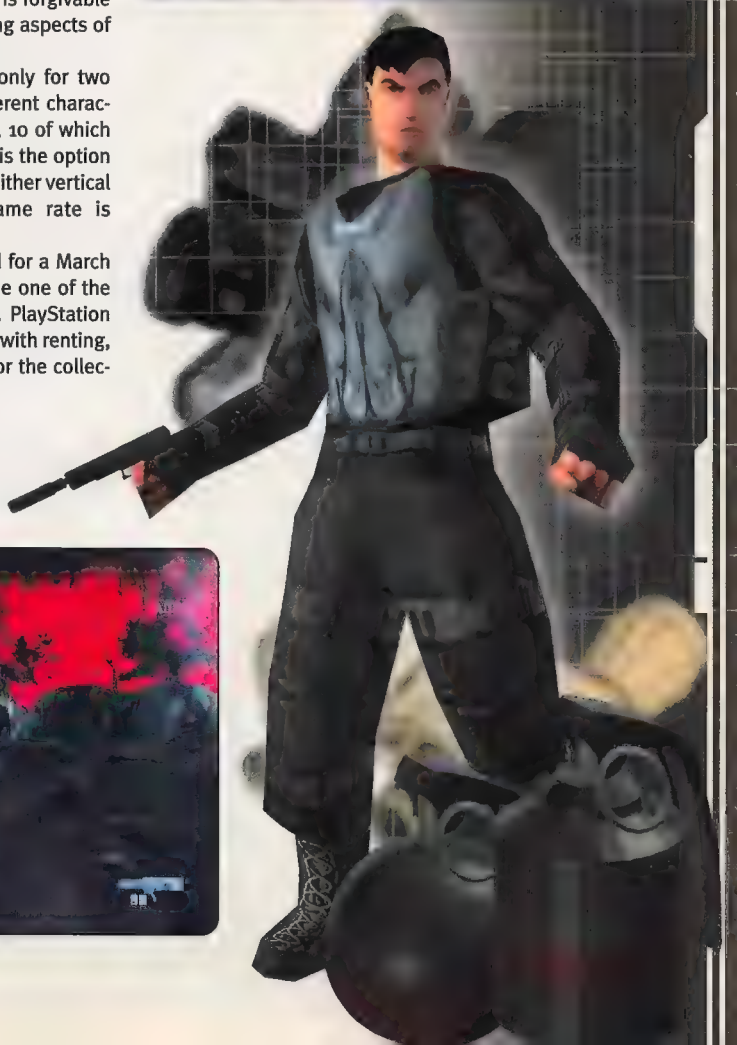
The series still includes the adding of new tasks while other tasks are being completed, and some of the tasks in SF2 are as inventive as were in the first title. A stage where Logan has to manipulate his way up, down and across girders under a bridge was vaguely reminiscent of the multi-tiered subway level in SF1. Also brilliantly executed, there are two different stages that find Logan running across the tops of a moving train's boxcars and flatbeds; and a very cool stage where Logan glows in the dark. And, combining the two, a glow-in-the-dark battle on top of the moving train.

Although it may be improved by the time the game is released, the enemy AI is rather suspect. There were times when, in stealth mode, Lian would be right in front of an enemy and not seen. Since it is not frequent or overwhelming, it is forgivable due to all the other immersing aspects of the game.

The multiplayer game is only for two people, but includes 10 different characters and 20 different arenas, 10 of which need to be unlocked. There is the option to play with the screen split either vertical or horizontal, and the frame rate is impressive.

Syphon Filter 2, scheduled for a March release, definitely looks to be one of the first must-have titles of 2000. PlayStation owners won't want to bother with renting, SF 2 will definetely be one for the collection. **GR**





VAGRANT STORY

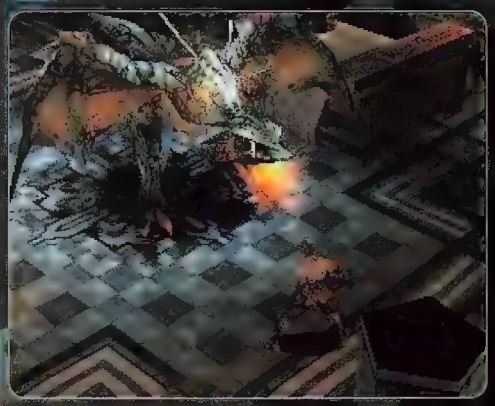
BY MIKE HOBBS

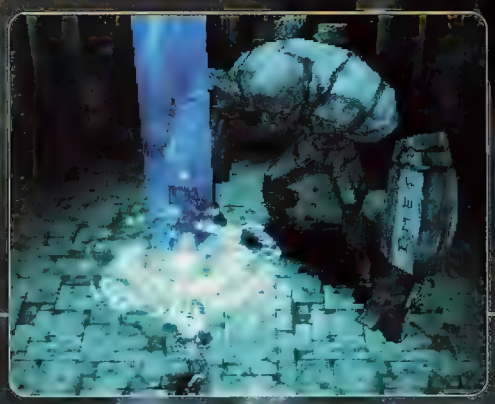
Vagrant Story received a perfect score in Japan's weekly *Famitsu* game magazine, something that has happened only a handful of times, most recently with Namco's Soul Calibur. Hopes were certainly high for Square's latest from the Final Fantasy Tactics team, but what has inspired such gushing praise from Japan's most finicky gaming publication?

Part of the appeal is obviously visual. Vagrant Story features incredible character design from Akihiko Yoshida, responsible for the similarly appealing work on display in Tactics and Ogre Battle. Here, he has created a cast of medieval heroes and villains that is at once realistic and fantastic, inhabiting a real-time world rich in earthtones and shadow—a world inspired, incidentally, by the old stone streets of Saint Emilion in Bordeaux. The game's luscious visual style sets the stage for wonderful real-time cinematics, probably the best on PlayStation since Metal Gear Solid. Using a bevy of cleverly implemented techniques from film like tracking shots, dollies, and distinctive and dramatic rim lighting, Vagrant Story's designers have created a deeply dramatic world within the limitations of the PlayStation hardware.

Under the direction of Yasumi Matsuno, Vagrant Story's action/RPG-flavored gameplay is as interesting as its visual presentation. With its Parasite Eve-like targeting sphere, individual body parts of enemies can be specified and attacked. A blow to a creature's legs, for instance, can decrease its movement ability by 50 percent. There are also chain attacks and defenses, wherein a timely button press can give you another hit or allow you to strike counterblows against your foes. And the nature of your attacks is hugely configurable, as there are tons of different weapon combinations and, of course, some wonderful-looking spells.

Our time with the Japanese beta of Vagrant Story proved highly fulfilling, and is further proof that when Square gathers the right people together, the results can be magic. It will take the English version before the true nature of the game can be known to us, but it's obvious that Vagrant Story is a supremely well designed game. **GR**





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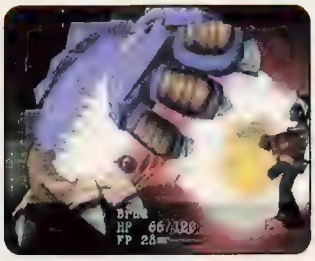
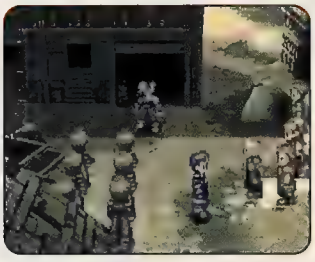




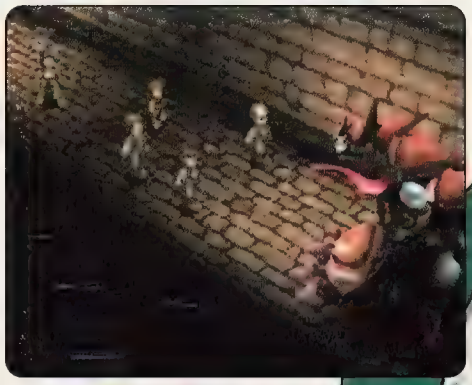
WILD ARMS 2

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Wild Arms was one of the PlayStation's first big RPGs back in 1997, so it's hard to not get nostalgic about the game. Ah, the incredible character design...the awesome neo-Wild West motif...the cool tools used for puzzle-solving. Wild Arms 2nd Ignition hit Japan last year, and now Sony is bringing it stateside as Wild Arms 2. Retaining the best features of the original game and adding many new elements, Wild Arms 2 looks like it may actually surpass its predecessor.

The most striking difference between Wild Arms 2 and the original is that the overworld and dungeon maps are now fully polygonal. Making the jump from 2D might make fans of the Old West design cringe, but fear not. The 3D world captures the same look and atmosphere of the original, with familiar dusty towns full of wood buildings and bandana-wearing citizens. The character graphics are still 2D renders, the exception being in fight scenes, which feature full-blown 3D characters just like the original did. One complaint about the original Wild Arms was the excessive amount of combat. Contrail, the game's developers, has made that problem a thing of the past by letting players avoid unnecessary battles. An exclamation point appears over the character's head just before battle, and players can simply tap their circle button to avoid most conflicts entirely.

Wild Arms 2 also has more playable characters than the original. While there are still three main characters (Ashley, Riruka and Brad) with their own intro quests, eight characters are playable in all, each with unique fighting abilities and special tools to use. That's right, the Zelda-like puzzle qualities that made the first Wild Arms such fun are back. Early in the game, Ashley tosses knives to hit switches, Riruka activates objects with her spells, and Brad pounds stuff with his combat boots. Classic items from the original, like the grappling hook and bombs, have even returned. Every indication says that Wild Arms 2 will be another great RPG for the PlayStation. **GR**



4 WHEEL THUNDER

previewed by chris hoffman • developer: midway publisher: kalisto • available: march

The Dreamcast has no shortage of racing games, but Midway's 4 Wheel Thunder might have enough going for it to separate it from the pack. At about 80 percent complete, Thunder has all the hallmarks of a solid arcade racing game including 24 courses complete with weather effects and shortcuts, and a variety of upgradable vehicles like monster trucks, jeeps, quads and buggies. The vehicles don't handle realistically, but they're easy to control. Aside from championship, arcade, and practice modes, two players can compete head-to-head. Currently Kalisto, the makers of Nightmare Creatures, is working on smoothing out the frame rate and adding more vehicles to each race (only four vehicles compete in this rev). The game already destroys TNN Hardcore Heat. **GR**

DUKE NUKEM: P.O.T.B.

previewed by jr haugen • developer: n-space • publisher: gt • available: march

Level upon level of ugly, ugly graphics. An abhorrent frame rate. Jerky, awkward control. Plus the lame sexist plot setup somebody must love in the Duke Nukem series. But Duke Nukem: Planet of the Babes isn't so much hindered by itself as it is by the limitations of the dated PlayStation hardware. Still, you look at any Tomb Raider game, and then you look at this, and you can see it's possible to make a great game in this genre. Duke Nukem: POB is going to need some severe tweaking by final release, and I don't know if that's going to happen. If you liked the last one, for whatever bizarre reason, then it's a safe bet you'll like this one. If you didn't, you'll probably want to stay away. **GR**

TUROK 3

previewed by b fiechter • developer/publisher: acclaim • available: fall

Given that we'll not see Turok 3 in playable form till E3, we can only reveal a few facts about this first-person shooter: (a) 24 upgradeable killing devices like the Eviscerator and Inferno Cannon can be used to blow stuff up in an extremely violent manner; (b) Turok will run through 20 levels in five really big environments, such as the ruins of a futuristic city and a return to the Lost Land, shooting stuff; and (c) there will be large beasts to shoot and kill. **GR**

WACKY RACES

previewed by b fiechter • developer: sheffield house (DC), appaloosa (PS)(PC) • publisher: infogrames • available: summer

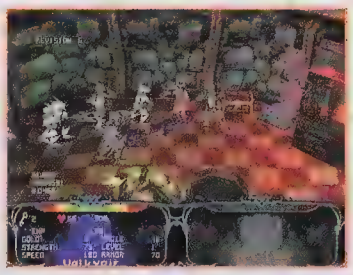
I've few memories of the Wacky Races cartoon, so unfortunately I can't open this preview with anecdotal humor.

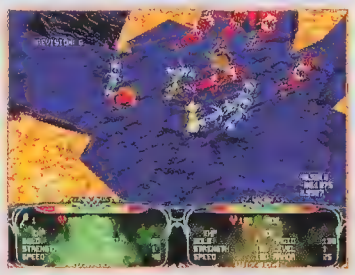
So on with the regurgitated facts: Dreamcast is getting another racing game, called Wacky Races, based on the Wacky Races cartoon. With contestants named Penelope Pitstop, Dick Dastardly and his sidekick Muttley, at least you know your getting a racing game with a little flavor. A blending of arcade and kart styles, Wacky Races offers competition heightened by track obstacles, both on- and offroad, as well as bumps and various power-ups. **GR**

GAUNTLET

previewed by c. hoffman • developer/publisher: midway • available: may

Midway's Gauntlet series is known for two things: four-player action and fast-paced gameplay. Unfortunately, the PlayStation version of Gauntlet Legends has neither at this point. Although it recreates all the levels of the Nintendo 64 game, including all the extras that the arcade version didn't have, only two players can fight together, and they move sluggishly at that. The graphics are also a bit disappointing, as the enemy characters have a low polygon count (probably to cram more on screen at once) and they look awfully jagged compared to the game's N64 and arcade counterparts. The screen-filling magic animations aren't even included in this version, with merely a tiny black splash indicating a spell has been cast. While the 2-player mode isn't going to increase to four, hopefully Midway can clean up the graphics and speed up gameplay before this version is complete. **GR**

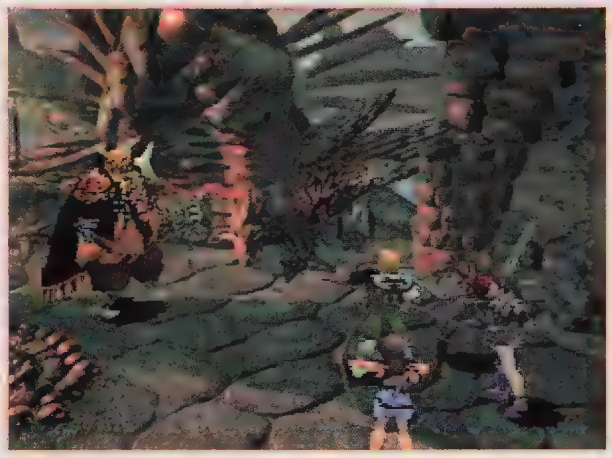




LEGEND OF DRAGOON

previewed by b. fiechter • developer/publisher: scei • available: spring

Legend of Dragoon is the kind of game that will thrill anyone who is in love with production values. This is one of the best-looking games on the PlayStation, competing with, if not surpassing, the absorbing beauty of Final Fantasy VIII-and its real-time battles are arguably superior. In development for over three years and designed by a team of over 100, this superb game is yet another reason to be an RPG fan. GR



SW EPISODE 1 : RACER

previewed by m hobbs • developer/publisher: lucasarts • available: spring

Whatever you thought of the Star Wars saga's genesis, there's no denying that the Podrace sequence is one of the great pieces of modern kinetic filmmaking. It's also an ideal basis for a video game, one that's already manifested itself on Nintendo 64, Mac, and PC. And just in time for the April release of Episode 1 on VHS (curse you, Lucas, for not allowing a DVD edition yet) is a shiny new Dreamcast version.

Presumably capable of aping the accelerated PC and Mac version polygon for polygon, expect the DC to deliver all the speed and wondrous environments that LucasArts intended, and which were somewhat compromised on the N64 version. The gameplay should remain largely untouched, and this is no bad thing, as Episode 1 Racer has always been blessed with surprisingly good racing action in all its iterations, capturing the intensity of the film's sequence on Tatooine, while broadening the canvas to include myriad other alien worlds.

By including the PC and Mac version's CG cinemas and boasting a proper redbook soundtrack, the DC version of Episode 1 Racer will undoubtedly be the best console version of this addictive racer. Look for a hands-on report in the coming months. GR

STREET FIGHTER EX 3

previewed by d smith • developer: arika • publisher: capcom • available: march

Street Fighter EX3, descendant of the arcade's 3D Street Fighters, will soon be available only for PS2. Since EX3 is the series' first original console title, Arika is experimenting with several new features. The game includes four modes: Original, Arena, Training, and Character Edit.

In Original mode, you fight through the tournament to battle Bison, but the battles won't be nearly as straightforward as you might expect. Along with one-on-one fights, there are two-on-two tag matches and one-on-three battles. What's more, after defeating an enemy, you can make them your partner in other tag matches – up to three characters can join your team, which makes it much easier to finish each stage.

In Arena mode, you can chose any battle mode, and team freely against the CPU or your friends. The Training mode lets you practice combos, moves, and so on, which is vital for practicing new combo methods.

The Character Edit mode lets you build your own fighter, based on the character "Ace," a new arrival to the EX series. You may not be able to customize his appearance, but by undergoing training and completing missions and tasks, you can earn experience points that allow you to learn new attacks and combos.

EX3's graphics have improved immensely since its first exhibition at the fall TGS. According to Arika, "the game will be even better by the time we are done, since everything in the game evolves each day." GR

NFS: PORSCHE UNLEASHED

previewed by m. hobbs • developer: eden publisher: ea • available: march

Porsche fanatics look sharp. EA is working on a racing game under the Need for Speed brand that aims to be a compendium of Porsche cars, past and present. Porsche Unleashed will feature everything from old 914s to their winning Le Mans car as you race through numerous game modes including capture the flag and straight tournament racing.

With an engine that seems related to the one used in V-Rally 2, trackside detail looks a little rough in our preview copy, but the lead car modeling is quite good, with an interior that you can actually see through the backlight, complete with driver figure. And the car exteriors are well rendered, with the distinctive flanks of the 911 Turbo for instance coming off very nicely.

There remains some tweaking to be done to the control, as it currently feels very understeer-y, but Porsche Unleashed is looking fairly decent so far. Hopefully, the end result will be good enough to recommend to even non-Porsche-philes. GR

RHAPSODY

previewed by d smith • developer: nippon ichi • publisher: atlus • available: spring

It's pleasing indeed to see an RPG that isn't quite so serious as some. Into a genre filled with demonic, world-destroying threats, where supporting characters are regularly offed to kick up the pathos level, arrives Atlus' Rhapsody, which seems to be just a little light on terrifying monstrosities, including relatively few moments of nail-biting intensity. Instead, it's the tale of a quest for true love, as the young musician Cornet travels through Marl's Kingdom in search of that most prized of emotions. This may be a detriment in the eyes of some, trained only in the acquisition of magic swords and the like, but my eyes see only a spell attack that casts a barrage of strawberry mille-feuilles at the enemy. This is a game worth looking into.

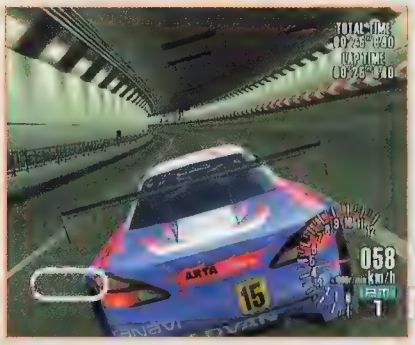
If the magical pastry death isn't enough to keep your spirits up, focus on the charming hand-drawn world (reminiscent of Seiken Densetsu) and the frequent musical interludes. Evidently, interacting with the score is a key gameplay element. The battle system is built around the acquisition of puppet servants (hence the Japanese title, Puppet Princes), animated toys that aid you in encounters – the cast of over twenty potential allies should help broaden the possibilities of the traditional, grid-based combat system.

As always, I worry that a game with such a fragile character might be harmed in the process of localization, but I'm calmed somewhat by Atlus' strong recent record, including the fine translation of Thousand Arms. I'm also pleased by their decision to release it this spring, which lands neatly amid a lull in major RPG releases. It would be a shame if Rhapsody were overshadowed by the blood and thunder of a more traditional, big-ticket adventure. **GR**

SEGA GT

previewed by mike hobbs • developer/publisher: sega • available: spring

We just missed out on receiving a playable version of Sega GT for this issue, so we'll just have to content ourselves with these new shots and the knowledge that this game is probably going to be exceptional. Recent reports from the Japanese press have pegged Sega GT as the current state-of-the-art in driving games, at least until the PS2 unleashes Ridge Racer V and GT2000. With a physics model said to rival that of Gran Turismo and the best graphics that the Dreamcast can currently pump out, Sega GT should be at the top of any racing fan's list. Look for a full review next month. **GR**



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• developer treyarch • publisher crav[illegible]

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

BY TOM STRATTON

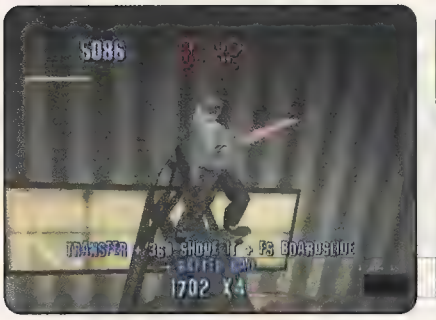
Higher res, a bigger world, and the same great control.
Skate on hardware that can go even higher

The Dreamcast is not short of great software. And come this spring, DC owners and prospective buyers will have one more reason to celebrate Sega's new fun-machine. The PlayStation runaway hit, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater will make a very special appearance with DC-exclusive features. We have been strong supporters of the game, and after some coordination with Crave, arranged a private hands-on run.

Now, all of you must understand that we were apprehensive regarding what the fate of this precisely and delicately crafted game would be in the hands of someone new. Pro Skater contains some of the most inventive play mechanics, which can only be compared to Street Fighter in terms of combo variety and satisfaction upon completing a complex move. If you don't know what I mean, then it's time you recognize. The trick system is very flexible and pushes you to carve out lines that seem impossible. This, integrated with the highly efficient level design, will always entice gamers to come back for more.

The new features for the DC version are mainly visual. Intense lighting and shadow effects really add to the depth and feeling of being inside a warehouse or skating outside on a nice sunny day in San Francisco. Player models are made up of about 1,500 polys each and lend a remarkable look to their human counterparts. Textures and particle effects have been cleaned up also, and are showcased in hi-res. The levels haven't been reconfigured and nothing has been added except for more polys on the ramps and pools. Treyarch has been very careful not to throw off the balance of how the game plays and responds.

Plans are to lock the action at 30 frames, which moves nicely and looks smooth. Sixty fps would have been awesome and is completely possible to do, though it seems to be a smarter move to maintain a constant 30 instead of having the system possibly juggle the action between the two numbers. The 30-fps action remains true during the two-player games too, which is important.

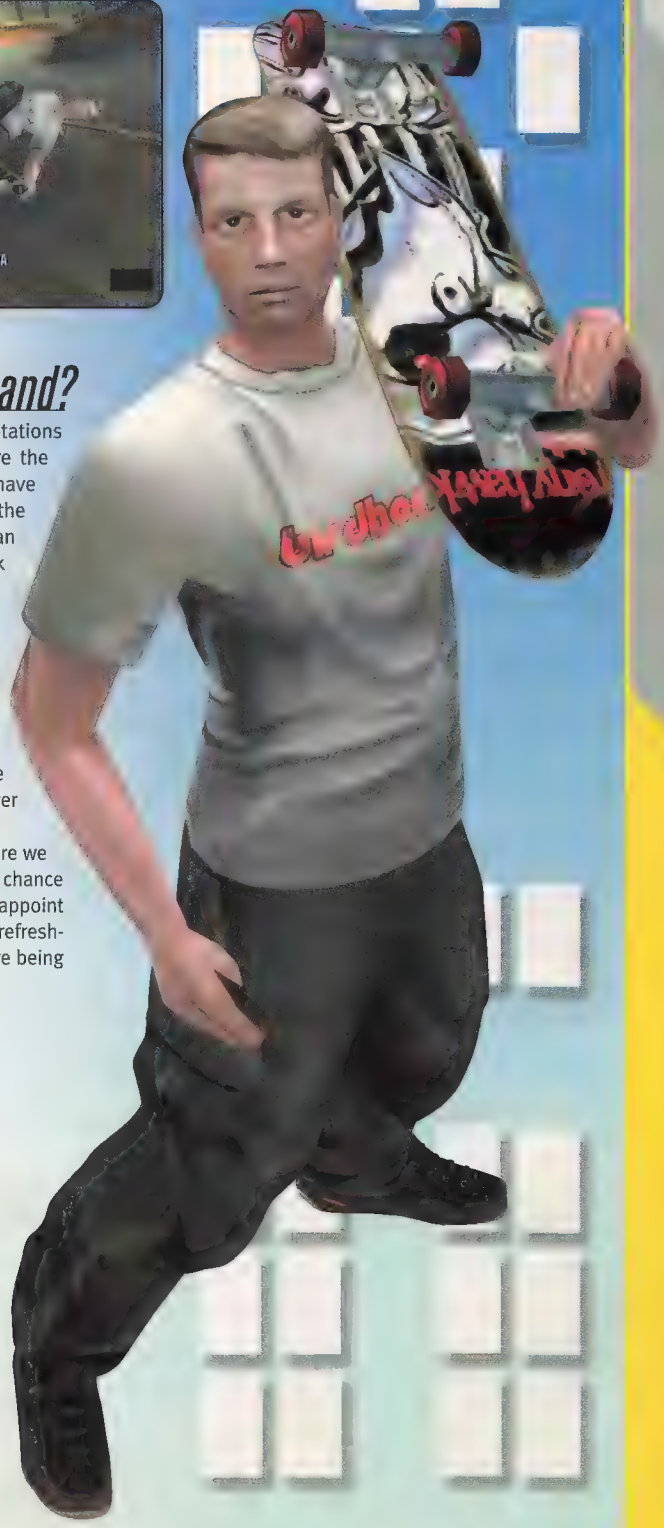


If some called it perfect on the Playstation... what could happen with 128 bits in command?

New animations are strung about. Some of them are more accurate interpretations of falling situations, while others are win-or-lose animation routines, where the skater will wave his board or slam it onto the ground. Most of the levels even have added environment graphics. The school in Miami, for instance, has trees in the planter boxes and the indoor competition levels now have windows that you can actually see out of. And I could swear that, when looking out of the Skate Park in Chicago, I see the same striped smoke tower I saw outside of one of Treyarch's office windows.

One issue I brought up during my meeting with Treyarch regarded some of the transfers and multipliers one earns while busting out tricks. Many times a wall ride will not register and will cancel a combo in progress. Also, there are some gaps and areas that definitely deserve transfer bonuses and don't. According to Treyarch, they are going to do everything they can to fix and/or include all of these. There haven't been talks of any VMU mini games—but if you glue the trucks and wheels of a Tech Deck to the bottom of one, it makes for a great finger board.

A more complete version of the game should show up at our office soon, where we should see more of the features talked about. If the two levels we did have the chance to tear apart are any indication, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater for the DC will not disappoint fans. It is really cool to see such a strong title make its way to Sega's camp, and refreshing to know that all of the parties involved in bringing this title out for the DC are being extremely careful not to disturb its integrity. **GR**



As you might know, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater has been a game we have followed since its beginning. One of our first outings with the game was with Tony himself, listening to what he wanted the game to convey. The rest has been history. History we are proud and fortunate to be a part of.

That said, it is only proper for us to continue to follow the evolution the game has made. The next stop? Sega Dreamcast. Coming to you courtesy of Treyarch and published by Crave. We had the chance to get an exclusive play session with the hot commodity and brought along our friend and Pro Skater arch-nemesis Jake Rosenberg to get a second opinion of the new conversion. Here's some of what was said that day.

GR: So, how long have you had the code for Tony Hawk's Pro Skater?

Treyarch: Since about mid-December.

GR: And how long did it take for you to get the game running on the Dreamcast?

Treyarch: I believe it was a three or four week period before the game was up and running.

GR: Was that with only one character and one level?

Treyarch: Yes. We were really happy to see that the conversion made a smooth transition.

GR: Being that you are working with the routine scripts Neversoft created for the PlayStation, was there anything you wanted to try to flesh out for the Dreamcast?

Treyarch: One of the obvious things we wanted to fix, or change, or rather improve, were all of the character models. And from a geometry standpoint that's probably one of the biggest improvements. The player models went from about five to six hundred polys to in excess of 1,300-1,500 polys. The bar has been raised pretty high and people expect human characters to look real on the Dreamcast.

GR: What are you hoping to deliver to Dreamcast owners when the game ships?

Treyarch: The big thing on the Crave side of handling this product, was that, no matter what, the awesome game experience was preserved. We wanted to make sure that even though we were making changes or enhancements, that the gameplay stayed true to the PlayStation title, which is an A+ experience. We have been extremely careful not to damage the integrity of the game.

GR: What sort of list of improvements did you want to implement to take advantage of the Dreamcast hardware?

Treyarch: The physics and level design are just about perfect, so we are not going to touch it. So the list of changes didn't include adding or changing tricks, reconfiguring levels or altering the design. Most of our list was comprised of bumping up the animations, textures and other visual elements.

GR: Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

PSX VARIAL TO DC REVERT

TREYARCH TALKS ABOUT DC PRO SKATER

All of your favorite tricks and stages are there, drawn with even more sharpness and detail. Oh, and by the way, we are almost certain that there will be a sky in the finished version.

Treyarch: One of the things that will really make a big difference is the full blown lighting effects, particle effects and real time shadows. All of these elements are going to make the Dreamcast version really pop out and add depth. As you've seen here already, there is a pretty dramatic improvement and the high-resolution textures are the icing on the cake.

GR: Are the environments going to receive a higher poly count to soften the jagged corners?
Treyarch: The ramps and bowls will go through a facelift to look more rounded and smooth, otherwise nothing else will be done to the levels. The draw-in is going to be pushed farther back as well, putting more of each level on the screen.

GR: Have any of the decisions been directly linked to the fact you are working with an already existing and efficient game engine?
Treyarch: We don't think that was ever really a factor. Recognizing how great the game already is, the changes we wanted to make are all actually enhancements to what already exists. By the way, I would like to state for the record that Jake has no questions because he is playing the game...and he's enjoying it!

Jake: Looking at it and now playing it, it definitely preserves the gameplay qualities and looks tons better, but there is no reason why this game is only running at 30 fps.
Treyarch: Well...there are three answers to that. A politically correct answer, a marketing answer and a sarcastic answer. You know, in the long run you can always do more. But on the other hand, you have games like, for instance, Shenmue, and look at how many years it has taken to develop. The reality is we would like to get this game into the Dreamcast owner's hands quickly. Now that doesn't mean we are going to cut corners. It means we are going to do everything we can to make the game as good as possible, but we are not going to spend a year optimizing the engine so we can push a 5,000 poly character around the screen. When this game ships we are proud to say that the Dreamcast owners will not be short-changed at all. There are currently four or five Dreamcast games that sell systems; Pro Skater will be another one of those games to add to the list.

GR: Now we play the two-player games on the PSX version a lot. The only gripes we have are the tailored levels made because of hardware limitations. Will you open those areas up, since the Dreamcast has the ability to handle the processing?
Treyarch: The horsepower limitation of the PlayStation is now gone, so the same textures and frame rate in the one-player game will be the same in multiplayer. Right now we are uncertain if we will open the levels up any more than they already are.

GR: So we hear there are going to be at least two more hidden characters?
Treyarch: Oh yeah? Cool!

GR: Ok, seriously. Are there plans for any other hidden characters? Maybe a character from other Treyarch or Crave games.
Treyarch: Officer Dick and Private Carrera are in the game. As for anyone or anything else, well you'll have to wait and see.

GR: Ever since the first murmurs of a Dreamcast version of Pro Skater, we have been very excited and curious to know how it was going to be handled. It is refreshing to know that Treyarch holds unwavering respect to what Neversoft has built and wants to keep the experience as satisfying. This visit has been enlightening and lots of fun. Thanks for the opportunity, everybody.
Treyarch: It has been our pleasure, we are glad to know you stand behind the game. It let's us know that we are conserving the personality Pro Skater possesses. Thanks for coming down.

Guess who? The uninitiated may be in the dark, but if you follow pro skating, you can probably recognize Birdhouse's Tony Hawk and Bucky Lasek, thanks to the amazing facial detail the Dreamcast makes possible.

Gamers' Republic Reviews

Games Reviewed This Issue

Domestic Reviews

Ace Combat 3 PS	B
Armored Core 3 PS	C+
Carrier DC	C+
Chu Chu Rocket DC	B+
Code: Veronica DC	A
Colony Wars: Red Sun PS	B
Daikatana N64	C
Deception 3 PS	B
Die Hard Trilogy 2 PS	C
Fear Effect PS	B
Nox PC	A-
Rayman 2 DC	A
Roadsters DC	C-
Rollcage Stage II PS	B-
South Park Rally N64	C
Super Magnetic Neo DC	A-
Time Stalkers DC	B-

Import Reviews

BioHazard: Gun Survivor	C-
Chase the Express	B-
Jet De Go!	C+
Kikaioh	B+
Rainbow Cotton	C-
Rescue Shot	B
Treasure Striker	B-
Undercover	D+

Sports Reviews

ECW: Hardcore Revolution	C-
Hot Shots 2	B
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	B
WWF Smackdown	A-

Handheld Reviews

Dinky Kong & Dixie Kong	B+
Magical Drop	B
SNK Gal's Fighters	B-

Game of the Month

Resident Evil Code: Veronica

developer: Capcom
publisher: Capcom

TIME STALKERS

BY MIKE HOBBS

The Dreamcast is certainly becoming *the* system for random dungeon RPGs. Including Time Stalkers, two out of the three RPGs currently on sale for DC abide by the rules of the ever-changing dungeon genre, a fact that is sure to send shivers of excitement through just about no one. Gamers wanting the 128-bit equivalent of a good PS RPG like Final Fantasy or Chrono Cross are going to have to wait, as potential Dreamcast powerhouses like Eternal Arcadia and Grandia II remain months away. But like its genre-mate Evolution, Time Stalkers is a decent game, offering up just enough pseudo RPG pleasure to keep the wait bearable.

If that sounds a bit like grudging praise, it's meant to; as much as I like this game (and Evolution), I can't fully endorse the whole random dungeon idea. Obviously there's no such thing as a gameplay device that is not in some way artificial, but working your way through floor after floor of random mazes and items certainly ranks highly on the list. And yet, Kan Naito and his team at Climax have infused Time Stalkers with game design solid enough to hold back the potential tidal wave of monotony. Battles are fast and optional with plenty of addictive leveling-up; you can and must capture monsters and add them to your party; new player characters are constantly revealed through a nice little story. There are even VMU mini-games that can be downloaded.

It's unfortunate then that Climax lost the plot a bit with regards to Time Stalker's graphics. Whereas Evolution has a supremely tidy, buttoned-up look to it, this game is a touch more ragged and first generation in its appearance and feel with overly simple models and wishy-washy collision. The game is well-colored and appealingly rendered, but Climax is obviously still learning the intricacies of modern 3D design.

Ultimately, I prefer Evolution over Time Stalkers, mostly for reasons of aesthetics and character, but I'll hazard that Time Stalkers is a more interesting game to play, and could sit comfortably next to Evolution in any gamer's library. GR

- GOOD GAME DESIGN FROM KAN NAITO
- TYPICALLY SOLID CLIMAX SCORE
- DRUDGERY OF RANDOM DUNGEONS
- UNDERDEVELOPED GRAPHICS

REPUBLIC SAYS... CLIMAX ENTERTAINMENT HAS DELIVERED A VERY PLAYABLE AND FUN RANDOM DUNGEON GAME, BUT THIS GENRE CONTINUES TO LEAVE ME A LITTLE BIT COLD.

B-

SUPER MAGNETIC NEO

BY DAVE HALVERSON

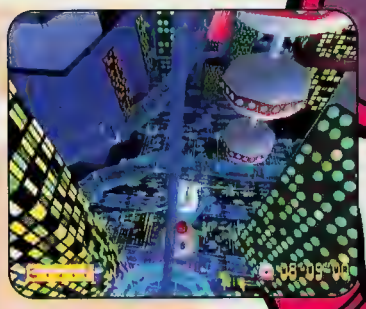
Old-school platforming finally makes its away to the Dreamcast.
Sharpen your super skills—Genki's jumpfest is coming to America!

I am shocked and amazed. And very happy. Somebody has actually gone and developed a hard-core old-school platformer for the Dreamcast—in 3D, no less! Genki, creators of Tokyo Highway Battle and Jade Cocoon, present Super Magnetic Niuniu. He may look like a cross between a Smurf, a Teletubby and a box of cereal, but he's starring in the Dreamcast's most challenging and compelling platformer to date (so what if it's the only one). Better yet, the game is already being localized for the U.S. market (as Super Magnetic Neo) via Crave, who will be bringing the magnetic one our way in June.

What makes SM Neo so special lies in its overall execution. Every facet of the game, from its zany appearance to its goofy character designs and nutty score, are tailored to perfection. Genki has taken the best elements of games like Crash Bandicoot and Bionic Commando, and surrounded them with a brilliant set of play mechanics of their own design. The essence of the gameplay lies in the melding of merciless platforming and long played-out grappling and timing drills, where even the slightest error or miscalculation sends you back to the last checkpoint. Neo himself radiates red and blue force fields that are activated with the corresponding buttons on the Dreamcast pad. Red and blue platforms bounce you by hitting the corresponding colored buttons, while swinging cables and monorails are latched onto by hitting the opposing colors. Now imagine strings of these elements with jumps and timing stunts in-between and you begin to get an idea of how the game is assembled.

The enemies in Neo come into play as well. Red enemies can be captured with blue energy (and folded up into tiny cubes) then tossed at walls, bosses, or what have you, and vice versa for blue. And what platformer would be complete without critters to ride? In this case, a robotic camel and horse get the honors along with (surprise!) a crazy mining cart ride.

If Super Magnetic Neo has an Achilles' heel, it lies in the game's difficulty factor; it requires mad skills to successfully negotiate. Each level presents a series of steadily harder challenges, separated by checkpoints (à la Crash). One-ups are generously distributed in the tougher sectors, but, still, some of the timing maneuvers are pretty brutal. Old-school



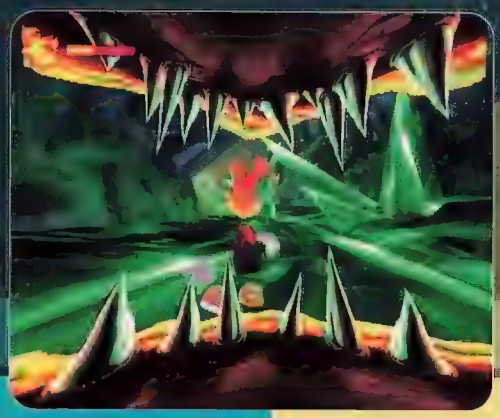
gamers won't just welcome these moments of gameplay; they'll absolutely revel in them. But I fear new users may balk at some of Neo's more unforgiving segments. Then again, back when I played Ninja Gaiden on NES for the first time, I pretty much sucked, but I stuck with it because of its feverishly addictive gameplay. Perhaps Neo will spark the same type of enthusiasm. Thankfully you can save in each world's hub, so emerging from each sub-level, you can breathe one final sigh of relief as your VMU gobbles up your progress.

The graphics in Super Magnetic Neo simply cannot be done justice in print. The game runs at 60 frames and has a brilliant look about it. Taking place in an amusement park (Pao Pao Park) that has been taken over by the deviant Pinko Bros., each world is like a cartoon caricature of a different time period, bustling with animation and brilliant color. Neither overly saturated or simplistic, each is a joy to behold. This is what I had in mind when 128-bit came to be. With this game, Fur Fighters, MDK 2, and Rayman 2 just around the corner, the Dreamcast is ushering in 2000 with a bang. If things continue along these lines throughout 2000, I don't think Sega has too much to worry about. Games like Super Magnetic Neo give a system life. I'm just shocked Sega didn't see this little guy coming in time to make him their own. This is certainly the best game Crave has ever been associated with, and besides the slight name change, they are leaving the game wholly intact. Their stock just went up in my book. **GR**

- PINPOINT ACCURATE CONTROLS
- INCREDIBLE LEVEL DESIGN AND GRAPHICS
- BIG CREATIVE BOSSES FOR EACH WORLD
- SUPER CHALLENGING AND VERY REPLAYABLE

REPUBLIC SAYS... SM NEO'S A GAME OLD-SCHOOL PLAYERS WILL WHOLEHEARTEDLY EMBRACE AND ONE THAT WILL TRULY TEST NEWCOMER'S SKILLS. MAN-STYLE GAMING IS ONCE AGAIN AT HAND!

A-



RAYMAN 2 THE GREAT ESCAPE

BY BRADY FIECHTER

As much of an equal as a sequel, this wonderful game captures the same magic that swirled in the 2D Rayman

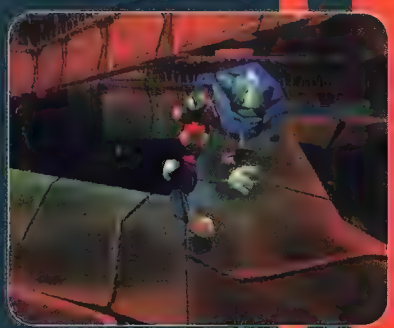
Rayman 2 is an extraordinary action platformer, enchanting and beautiful, ceaselessly entertaining. Every element that made the original a wondrous achievement has been meticulously preserved for this sequel-the best game of its kind since Shigeru Miyamoto's masterpiece Super Mario 64.

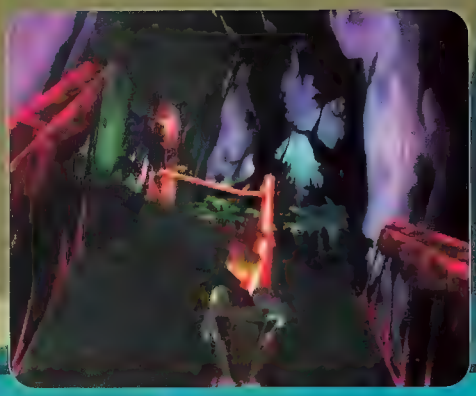
To play Rayman 2 is to drift into a dream, a fantasy world that comes alive with astonishing colors and magical settings. Everything is so rich and fantastical, bold and graceful, that the game moves beyond the ordinary in a way that seems to open a fresh and new visual experience.

The hero of the game is the peculiar Rayman, a limbless being who looks like...well, like nothing you've really seen before. His head, hands and feet float out from his body, detached from a tear-drop torso that suspends itself in midair, defying gravity. Rayman is a delightful creation, graceful in his movements and animations.

He may not look like much of a fighter, but Rayman's resolve is put to the test when a nasty pirate named Razor Face invades Rayman's world, imprisoning many of its peaceful inhabitants. Razor Face's minions have trapped their victims in cages, which Rayman must find and destroy. These poor little souls cry out when Rayman comes near, their little whimpers genuinely disheartening, moving you to rescue every last one.

While Rayman must rescue as many of his friends as possible, as well as collect scattered fire-fly-like creatures, his only chance of permanently ending Razor Face's reign of terror (I can't help but smile as I write that) is by calling on the power of the god of the world, Polokus. To accomplish this, Rayman must collect four scattered masks that allow him to communicate with Polokus through his dreams, invoking his magical powers. Every area becomes increasingly difficult, and the only way the masks can be found is with the aid of an enchanting being name Ly, who helps partially





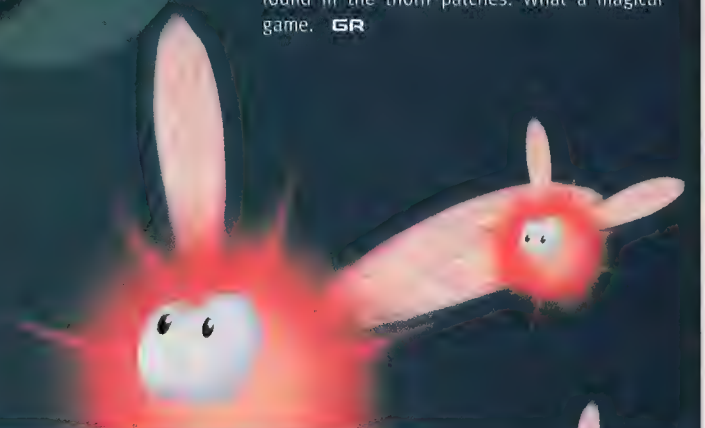
restore powers Rayman has lost. These include flying, swinging on rings, and a charge attack for the magical projectiles shot from Rayman's fist.

While there is certainly a good share of action in Rayman 2, the focus of the game is on avoidance and platforming. There is an endless supply of entertaining and inventive situations, challenging you to reach for a variety of skills, both traditional and new. One of my favorite moments in the game is when Rayman jumps into a chair sus-

pended on a beam of energy, zooming into the screen as various obstacles rush by. In another area, a rocket sprouts feet, and you must ride it like a rodeo bull through disorienting, twisting and turning paths. And I'll never get tired of riding on a giant plum, shooting to propel across treacherous terrain.

Certainly the most used gameplay element in the game—other than, of course, jumping—is Rayman's helicopter hair. Reaching far off ledges, jumping across lava pits and abysses, floating up streams of air and spiraling down vertiginous drops—all of these involve Rayman gliding with his twirling locks. Sure it's been seen in some form before, but rarely has this type of play mechanic been so successfully implemented.

UbiSoft is in complete control of all the aspects that make a special game. But what lifts this game to greatness are the little extra touches that have been dreamed up for the Rayman universe. The delightful, nonsensical speech patterns of the inhabitants. The towering mechanical beast that lifts its leg to scratch. The mushrooms dancing in the flower beds. The elegant swirls of clouds, the ornate patterns even found in the thorn patches. What a magical game. GR



- SUPERB SENSE OF VISUAL FANTASY
- SUCH EXTRAORDINARY USE OF COLOR
- PERFECT GAMEPLAY
- AS GOOD AS THE ORIGINAL

REPUBLICSAYS... AS EXPECTED, RAYMAN 2 IS EVEN BETTER THAN THE N64 VERSION, WITH MANY IMPROVEMENTS, SOME MINOR, SOME SIGNIFICANT.

CODE: VERONICA

BY BRADY FIECHTER

The first fully real-time Resident Evil game takes this unrivaled series to an even higher plateau

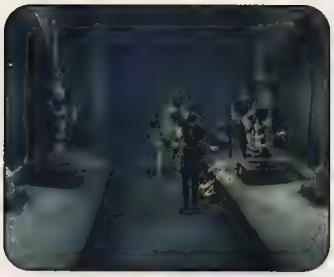
Here is a game that locks you in a vise of tension, slowly tightening its hold to a gripping conclusion. It is a game of great craft and striking images, a rare achievement that involves you on an emotional level.

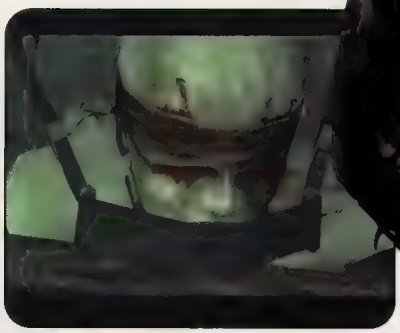
Resident Evil Code: Veronica thrives on its gloomy atmosphere. The setting is inspired, of course, by a zombie apocalypse. Everything is crumbling, burning, leaking, torn down and lying in rubble. A fog of slate gray settles in every corner, further enhancing the desolation and dark mystery of the surroundings.

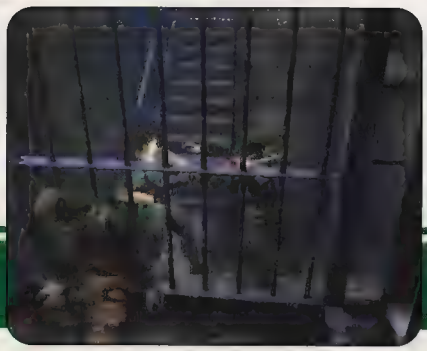
At times eerie, always somber and shadowy, Code: Veronica mixes its mood with images of splendor and absorbing beauty. There are moments in the game when I would enter a room and be led to simply stop and drink in the artistry—the paintings on the walls, the antique dolls resting under elegant table lamps, the candles casting a spectacular glow that crawls on the walls. There is an abundance of rich, extraordinary details tucked away in the corners of the screen, inviting you to pause and enjoy.

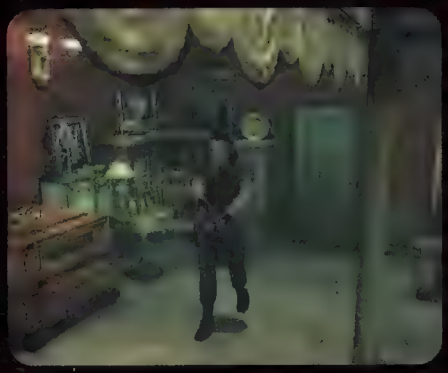
The game is a technical marvel, exhibiting a detail and sophistication in its 3D world that can only be rivaled by Sega's epochal Shenmue. It uses CG sequences masterfully, and the action is framed in a way that is exciting and engaging. The blending of gameplay with a superb sense of cinematic technique elevates Code: Veronica to new heights.

While most action games are strapped to stories bereft of emotion and substance, Code: Veronica actually benefits greatly from a smart, interesting, involving story full of entertaining, sometimes shocking twists. To detail the events in the game would give away too much, so about the safest description I can give is: Claire Redfield is searching for her brother Chris, she meets a volatile guy named Steve Burnside, and they all work together to discover more of







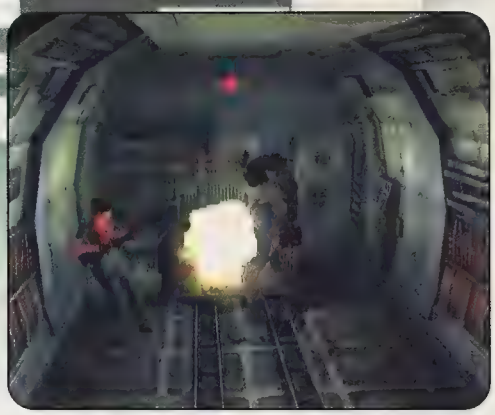


the pieces to the convoluted Umbrella puzzle. Veterans of the series will feel right at home, perhaps a little surprised at just how competent the voice acting is.

Part of Code: Veronica's effect depends on the emotion of these three characters. So detailed are their faces that you see nuance and feeling, which evokes a sense of connection with them, whether they're in pain, afraid, confused, concerned. Instead of finding meaning in the words, we are finally reaching a level of video game design where emotion can also be found in the images.

Some of the elements in Code: Veronica are, of course, recycled from other Resident Evil games, especially the feel of the characters and the familiarity with the combat system. Puzzles are as prominent as ever, varied, thought-provoking and always entertaining. And as in the last two games, you assume the role of more than one character, only now the quests are more interconnected and complete, rather than an afterthought of design. After the adventure with Claire moves off the island complex and to Antarctica, Chris comes into the picture, and the situations he finds himself in are unexpectedly complex and entertaining.

Because the game is in real time, there is an added dimension to the look and feel of Code: Veronica. This is still pure Resident Evil, but despite any similarities, not once does the game seem stale or uninspired. With the power of Dreamcast and the powerful imaginations of the Sega design team—this is the first RE game developed outside Capcom—every quality that has made this series tower over ordinary games has been heightened, honed, expanded. My heart pounds when the mini-Tyrants extend their elastic arms to the balcony I'm walking on, launching themselves from across the screen. My hair bristles when I walk across a steel grating and look down at a decaying figure bound and gagged in a dungeon, its exposed heart pounding in its bloody chest. My eyes soak in the compelling surroundings. And I think to myself: this is why I love video games. GR



- 3D JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER
- UNCOMMON DISPLAY OF CINEMATIC TECHNIQUE
- GRIPPING MOOD AND SUSPENSE
- SOME OF THE BEST PUZZLES IN THE SERIES

REPUBLIC SAYS... IT FEELS THE SAME, PLAYS THE SAME, SOUNDS THE SAME. AND IT TOWERS OVER MOST GAMES. RESIDENT EVIL IS AS STRONG AS EVER.

A

FEAR EFFECT

BY BRADY FIECHTER

Inspired by anime and grim science fiction, this ambitious, story-driven game is packed with unique and interesting ideas

In the opening scene of Fear Effect, a young girl is led through the shadows by a procession of masked figures. Her voice-over heightens the ominous mood: "I wanted salvation ... I had never experienced pain. And I so wanted to feel it now. I wasn't disappointed." Her words end along with her life, as a blade slices through her neck.

What an intriguing setup this is. Haunting questions are raised, and we immediately want the answers. But as with any good story, the answers will not come quickly, and the game holds us in its grasp until we meet with the mythical and surprising conclusion.

The first thing we learn is that the girl who was murdered is a runaway named Wi Ming, daughter of a powerful businessman who oversees his towering empire in the heart of Hong Kong. It is in this gritty, murky, anime-inspired city of a future China where Fear Effect begins.

Enter Hana Tsu-Vachel and Royce Glas, two mercenaries out to find the missing Wi Ming. Their motivation: money. Later joining them in their search is a brute of a man named Jakob Decourt, the final member of the team.

The characters have distinct backstories that, in theory, separate their abilities and characteristics, but they really only vary in physical appearance: everyone has ample weaponry, and they all use them basically the same way: aim and shoot. But what makes the game uniquely interesting is the constantly shifting player perspective. As the story progresses, the action switches at key moments, moving you from one character to the next. At times, you're unwittingly dumped into a frantic scene, and you must think fast to escape.

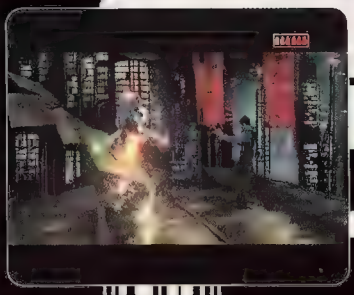
Which can be a problem. There is a gauntlet-like method to progressing through the game, and often the only way to dissect a dangerous situation is by dying multiple times to reach a solution. Still, the game is never overwhelmingly frustrating, and it's always satisfying when you finally clear an area.

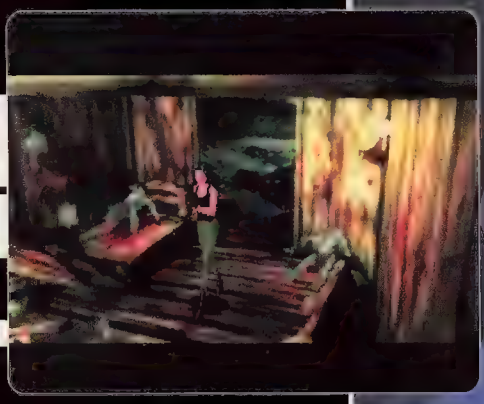
Combat in Fear Effect is intense and ceaseless, adhering to a strong action-game formula. There is a target at the top of the letterboxed screen that lights up when an enemy is in your site; sneak up behind someone, and the target turns red for a one-shot death. The character

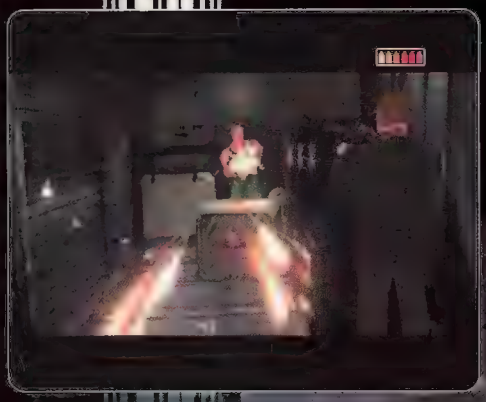
movement is a bit cumbersome in the prerendered environments, but not to the extent of dragging the game down.

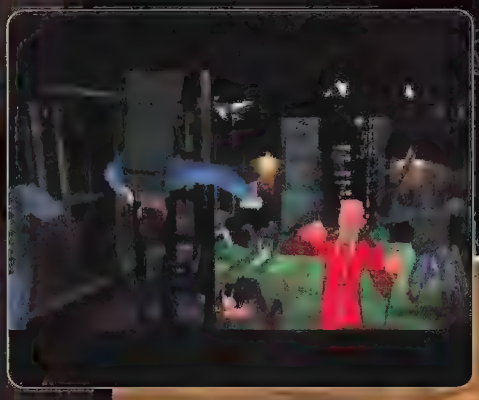
Like in any good action game, you will often find yourself in dangerous situations, but part of the experience is being able to manage your adrenaline. Instead of finding health packets to mend wounds, your level of injury is dependent on your level of fear. While this is certainly a fresh approach to life bars, it never quite affects the game like you might think; you end up assessing situations as you would in any other action title of this nature.

As much as I enjoyed equipping a pair of automatic weapons and blasting away, Fear Effect is at its best when engaging the eyes and mind—I really enjoyed the puzzle solving—and the story, cinematic elements, and unique Western-noir-inspired, streaming images (the background is essentially a running movie) create an interesting and absorbing space to exist in. More inspired and ambitious than exceptionally competent, Fear Effect is a game of ideas—one that hits plenty of high notes, yet hints of much greater possibilities. GR









- STRONG STORY TOLD THROUGH EXCELLENT CUT SCENES
- DUSKY WORLD UNIQUE AND INTERESTING
- AWKWARD CONTROL AND CHARACTER MOVEMENT
- THE LOOPING VIDEO FREQUENTLY SKIPS

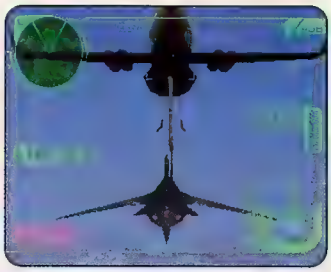
REPUBLIC SAYS... A GAME OF INTERESTING IDEAS, FEAR EFFECT SUCCEEDS DESPITE SOME SLOPPY DESIGN ELEMENTS. IT DESERVES TO BE ON BETTER HARDWARE.

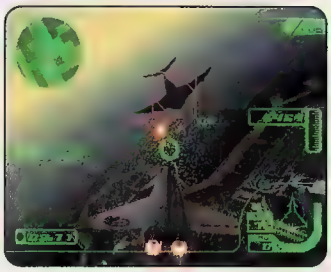
B

ACE COMBAT 3

BY MIKE HOBBS

There aren't many surprises in Namco's Ace Combat trilogy capper, but you'll not find a better looking action/flight game

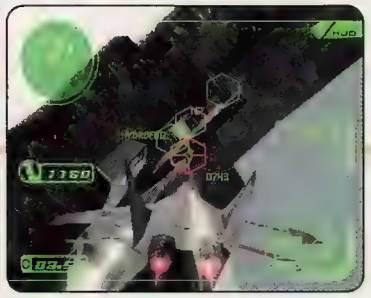




I was concerned about the changes that Namco was making to the U.S. version of Ace Combat 3. After playing and enjoying the Japanese release last year, I was particularly impressed with the sheer amount of information presented between each mission, with mock newscasts and wonderfully illustrated cinemas at every turn. And then there was that interface, a beautifully colored and animated bit of design genius. Well, the interface is still there in the domestic release, but the story elements have been stripped way down, and it has had an interesting effect on the game. In its new, streamlined form, Ace Combat 3's missions take on more prominence in the overall impression of the game, and magnified thusly, their somewhat predictable nature becomes more apparent. I suppose the original Japanese version had that foreign-film effect, where dialogue and occurrences seemed more interesting and better than they maybe were.

But you know what? Nearly any game like this proves to be predictable; there are only so many ways one can blow up another plane, strafe a military installation, however well done it may be. So with little happening in the originality department, Namco has ramped up everything else, from the aforementioned interface to the splendid graphics engine and resultant imagery. With so much of my current gameplay time focused around the Dreamcast, it's a testament to the technical artistry of a developer like Namco that I can still be very impressed with the look of a PlayStation game. Yes, Ace Combat 3 is grainy and the distance tiles-in like mad, but the illusion of nighttime cities and dusky sky-scapes, for example, has been pulled off masterfully, and surely as well as can be done on PS.

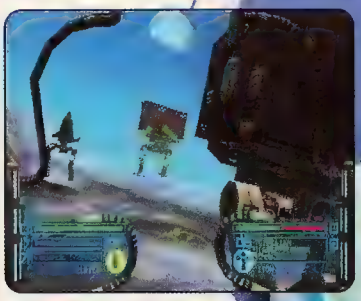
Think of Ace Combat 3 then as a big budget summer movie–supremely well put together and designed to please, but shallow at its core and easy to digest. Like most trilogy cappers that function under the idea that everything has already been done the first two times around, a really nice light and sound show sits in the place of innovation. GR



- IMPECCABLE VISUAL PRESENTATION
- SUPREMELY WELL PRODUCED
- A BIT LIMP COMPARED TO AC2
- NOTHING NEW HERE

REPUBLIC SAYS... YOU'VE DONE ALL THIS BEFORE, BUT THERE'S ENOUGH SHEEN AND QUALITY DESIGN TO MAKE THE TRIP WORTHWHILE. ACE COMBAT 3 MAY NOT SOAR, BUT IT DOES SHINE.

8



COLONY WARS RED SUN

BY MIKE HOBBS

As a series, Colony Wars has earned an enviable reputation for quality. First-rate production values and exciting, well-conceived mission-based shooting action fulfilled a good number of gamer's 3D wishes, reviewer's included.

With a new team at the helm of this third outing, the classic Colony Wars formula could have been subject to some ill-conceived tweaking, but developers at Psygnosis' Leeds Studio have thankfully left well enough alone. For the most part, that is.

Fire up Colony Wars: Red Sun and you'll find the familiar deep-space look intact, only now a little bit richer and more colorful, with better looking, though still foggy, ground-based levels. You'll find more diversity in the various craft and missions in the game, and you'll be introduced to a new kind of hero for Colony Wars, a mercenary-for-hire called Valdemar. Through this type of protagonist, the developers have devised, almost paradoxically, a more linear game, abandoning the sprawling, multi-path structure of the previous Colony Wars. While this may ruffle the feathers of some of the series' more ardent followers, it tends to make the game a little less obtuse and more straightforward. It's an acceptable design choice in the end, mostly because we all know that it's the action, more than the structure, that carries a game like this, and Red Sun's gameplay is right on the mark. Whether setting up attack runs on massive cruisers, picking off turrets mounted on the backs of great lumbering beasts, or grappling vital equipment, the well-worn Colony Wars mix of shooting and task-based action makes another welcome showing.

Let it be known that I probably couldn't stomach another Colony Wars on 32-bit hardware, just because this series seems to have done all that it can on the aging PS, both graphically and dynamically. I now look to the future of Colony Wars, and with its reputation intact, thoughts of a 128-bit version are just that much sweeter. GR

- GORGEOUS 3D IMAGERY
- STRONG SHOOTING ACTION
- MUSICAL SCORE MISSES THE MARK
- REACHED ITS LIMIT ON PS

REPUBLICSAYS... THE THIRD AND PROBABLY LAST COLONY WARS FOR THE PS DRAWS THE SERIES TO A CLOSE ON HIGH NOTE. ANOTHER SLICK EFFORT FROM PSYGNOSIS' LEEDS STUDIO.

8

DECEPTION III: DARK DELUSION

BY DAVE SMITH

Deception's third evolution offers more sneaky thrills.

Throw the switch and watch your deadly traps unfold

A girl flees an armed pursuer through the halls of a gloomy castle. Suddenly, she's cornered. There's nowhere to run, and it seems as if the hulking thug's sword will mean her end. What else could happen?

Well, in this case, a leghold trap appears out of nowhere, holding him fast. Suddenly, the trap fries him with a few thousand volts. To his left and right, arrow slits appear, piercing him with poisoned darts. Okay, looks like it's all up for this fellow, but for good measure, a flaming boulder rolls down the hallway and squashes him flat.

That, as they say, is entertainment. I never tried Tecmo's first two Deceptions, but their blend of 3D action and puzzle gameplay certainly sounded intriguing. Deception III: Dark Delusion confirms my suspicions—this is a marvelously entertaining concept, accompanied by some nice visual touches.

Deception places you in a 3D arena with a number of adversaries. Your object is to do away with them, but your only weapons are traps, devices you can place on the battlefield and trigger to indirectly cause the enemy's demise. It's possible to use traps in straightforward fashion—guy walks under boulder, splat. However, those schooled in combination-oriented puzzles (chess, Puyo Puyo) will see many more possibilities. Creative combinations are the key to the game, because they earn you many more points, and the more points you earn, the more new traps you can earn after each level.

Each stage is bookended by cutscenes that advance the story. Dark Delusion in fact has an involving plot...or it would, if more care had been taken with the translation. The dialogue is stiff, typos abound, and the translators appear to have difficulties with colloquialisms: "onei-san" (or some analog) is translated as "missy," for example, which quite ruins some scenes. It's difficult to bond with characters who don't speak in a recognizably human fashion. This is a pity, because I'm very fond of the character designs. Alendarian fashion reminds me of 18th-century France, which I've always considered one of history's most stylish times and places.

The point of Deception, however, is the action, and in that respect it delivers. It's a puzzle game more than anything else, but it's an original puzzle concept, and the level design has obviously been refined through experimentation - level-specific environmental traps add immensely to the game's variety. In this age of games, Tecmo has chosen only a few areas of expertise, but what they do, they do quite well. GR

- ORIGINAL TRAP-BATTLE CONCEPT
- INTELLIGENT, VARIED LEVEL AND TRAP DESIGN
- SHARP CHARACTER DESIGN: REINA SURE IS CUTE
- A SMOOTHER TRANSLATION WOULD HAVE HELPED A LOT

REPUBLIC SAYS... DECEPTION ISN'T NECESSARILY ABOUT GRAPHICS OR STORY, IT'S ABOUT THE IMMENSE SATISFACTION OF A SLICK COMBINATION TRAP. A WELCOME CHALLENGE TO THE BRAIN AND THUMBS.

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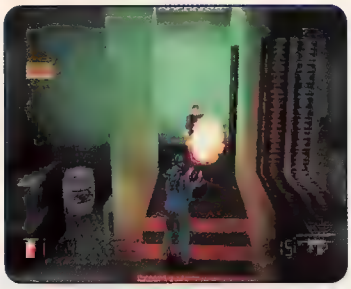
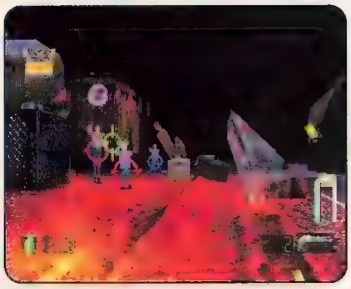


DIE HARD TRILOGY 2

BY BRADY FIECHTER



It may be faithful to the ideas of the hugely popular Die Hard Trilogy, but this mishandled, belated sequel lands off the mark

Given that Die Hard Trilogy was such an enormous success, you'd think this obligatory sequel would have found a release date a long time ago. Maybe if it had, the result would have been more appealing, because Die Hard Trilogy 2: Viva Las Vegas looks and plays like an early-generation PlayStation game.

Returning to quell yet another band of heavily armed terrorists is John McClaine, the unlikely hero cop who's always finding himself in the wrong place at the wrong time: you've seen the *Die Hard* movies, you know the routine. And if you've played Die Hard Trilogy, you'll be immediately accustomed to your character's objectives: blow stuff up.

Once again, the game is presented in three separate scenarios: driving, third-person action, and first-person shooting. The action takes place in several locations across Las Vegas and the Nevada desert, and you have the option of playing either Movie mode, which interweaves all three distinct game styles into a story-driven adventure, or Arcade mode, which allows you to pick your favorite game engine and play the levels straight through in sequence.

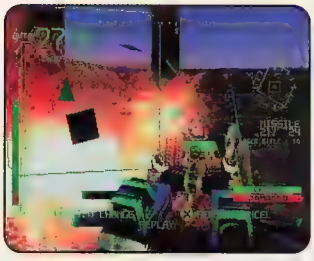
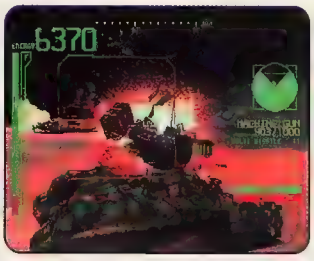
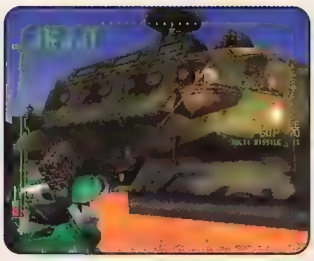
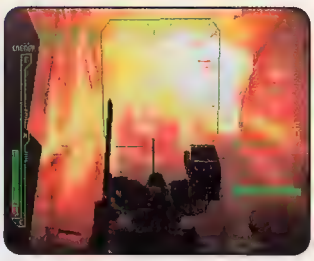
There were times when I enjoyed Die Hard Trilogy 2. The game is at its best in the third-person action sections, where the goal is to simply find key cards and mow down everything that moves—uninspired but somewhat effective. The gun game also finds moments of fun despite its perfunctory design, but the driving game fails miserably, hobbled by lackluster graphics and weak track-down-the-object-and-run-into-it gameplay.

What drag the game into mediocrity are the countless flaws that overshadow the successes. Flaws like the suffocating fog that obscures enemies. And the stiff, clumsy control of your character. And the lifeless visuals. And the mechanical gameplay that can't sustain its simplistic appeal. Add all this up and you're stuck with an anticipated sequel that never quite reaches take-off speed. **GR**

- RAPID-FIRE GAMEPLAY, FAITHFUL TO THE ORIGINAL
- BUT LACKS THAT GAME'S FRESHNESS AND SOLID PRESENTATION
- TRANSPARENCY EFFECT SHOULD AFFORD MORE DETAIL
- FEELS LIKE AN OLD PS GAME

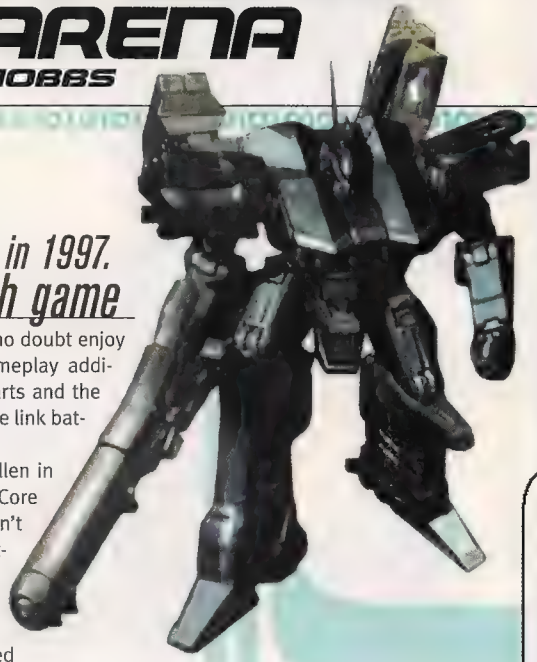
REPUBLIC SAYS... DESPITE ATTEMPTING TO STAY FAITHFUL TO DIE HARD TRILOGY, THIS DISAPPOINTING SEQUEL CAN'T EXECUTE THE ORIGINAL GAME'S IDEAS.

C

ARMORED CORE
MASTER OF ARENA

BY MIKE HOBBS



Have you seen this before? Of course you have, back in 1997. From continues their search for the ultimate mech game

From Software has carved out a nice little niche for itself, releasing, among other things, a steady stream of Armored Core games and updates to King's Field. Generally solid affairs, one can always count on a From game to at least deliver a few well-designed thrills, and its latest, Armored Core: Master of Arena, fulfills this expectation.

The biggest single problem with the game, however, is that there's very little to distinguish this third entry in the Armored Core series from its predecessors. Minor tweaks aside, Master of Arena more or less looks the same, plays the same, even sounds the same, as the two games that came before it. Sure, there are new missions (some quite good) and a more expansive arena fighting mode, but all but the most die-hard fan would be hard-pressed to tell the difference at first glance between MoA and the first Armored Core, which came out way back in 1997. But Armored Core maniacs, of which there are actually quite a few, will no doubt enjoy the subtle enhancements and gameplay additions, reveling in the new mech parts and the still strong and quite fun one-on-one link battles.

As for the rest, if you haven't fallen in love with From Software's Armored Core series by now, Master of Arena isn't going to change your mind. For first-timers, however, I would be wrong to claim that the series' concept hasn't held up, and indeed, this is still a good game of mission-based mech combat, arena fighting, and mech customization, and is as fine an entry as any other. That's not exactly high praise for a sequel, which should take established ideals and expand on them. This feels more like a mission pack, only at full price.

Those looking for a truly enhanced sequel to Armored Core will have to wait for the mighty-looking PS2 game, which is due to launch sometime this year in Japan. Then we'll see if From will deliver a proper sequel. I have a feeling they will. GR

- CLASSIC ARMORED CORE ACTION
- LINK MODE STILL INTACT
- DEEP MECH CUSTOMIZATION
- INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM PREDECESSORS

REPUBLIC SAYS... LIKE PROJECT PHANTASM BEFORE IT, MASTER OF ARENA IS MORE OF AN UPDATE THAN A WHOLE NEW GAME, SURE TO PLEASE ARMORED CORE FAITHFUL, BUT LEAVE CASUAL FANS SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS.

C+

ROLLCAGE STAGE 2

BY DAVE HALVERSON

From ATD, the creators of such sublime software as Cybermorph and Battlemorph, comes the second installment of their like-styled racer, Rollcage. Brought to you by Psygnosis, kings of such futuristic cuisine, Rollcage Stage II provides more of what made the first game a success while bringing to the table many welcome refinements and modes of play.

Graphically the game is on par with the console's best, saturated with all types of psychedelic effects from plumes of motion blur to trippy distortion effects. Of the 16 new modes, many of which need to be opened up, the main attractions are Type 1 Campaign, Time Attack, and Scramble. In Type 1 Campaign (which consists of Total and Classic), Total is based on strategic weapon expenditure and fast lap times combining for high scores (so you don't necessarily have to win to win), while in Classic, it's all about straight racing and tactics. In Arcade mode you pick a track, your skill level, number of laps, and just go. And then there's Scramble, which is comprised of crazed mini-games designed primarily to make you fling your Dual Shock into the nearest wall. Aside form the plethora of one-player options, Stage II has an impressive two- and four-player roster as well. The multi-player venues in this game are truly deep, including five new combat arenas, and a kooky Rubble Soccer contest that's, well, different, to say the least. The gameplay in Stage II has undergone a serious overhaul as well, with a new handling system and 12 brand new weapons that can be doubled.

Bundling all of this futuristic racing matter together ATD, has given Stage II a slick club design interface, a jammin' techno score and three different intro movies that play randomly. The courses are still somewhat short for my taste and even with all of the added nuances Rollcage still seems a somewhat frantic overall racing experience. I did, however, thoroughly enjoy the new F-Zero-like courses, and still really dig the compilation of futuristic locales, techno beats, insane FX, and frenetic action. I suppose this one boils down to personal taste. The game certainly delivers as promised. **GR**

■ EXCELLENT GRAPHICS AND INTERFACE ■ QUALITY TECHNO SCORE	■ STILL A BIT TOUCHY IN THE CONTROL DEPT. ■ SOME OF THE NEW MODES I CAN LIVE WITHOUT

REPUBLICSAYS... WHILE STAGE II IS A DEFINITE IMPROVEMENT ON AN ALREADY GREAT RACER, I CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER IS THERE'S ROOM FOR IT.

B-

SOUTH PARK RALLY

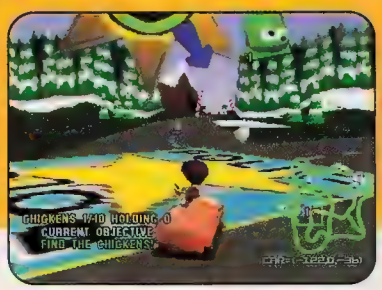
BY DAVE HALVERSON

Grab a box of Chocolate Salty Balls and South Park-it for awhile. SPR is certainly the quirkiest kart racer of the lot

Skipping the PlayStation version of South Park Rally altogether (I suggest you do the same) and moving directly to the 64 game (while really pining for the Dreamcast version), I find myself torn between my love for South Park as an entity, my love of kart racing, and the decision of whether authentic hare-and-hound elements mix well enough with racing to win SPR mainstream acceptance. The game's free stages—where, for example, you'll need to grab and then hold onto the antidote for Mad Cow disease for two minutes while five other infected South Park residents who crave its medicinal qualities chase you down—are fun, and certainly get the adrenaline flowing. But I'm wondering if the masses would rather see the emphasis on straight weapon-based kart racing with these bouts as mini-games instead. It might not even be an issue if not for the coin system that Tantalus has adopted to gauge the game's challenge. You begin the Championship mode with five coins, and each time you lose, must give one up. Run out of coins and it's game over. If you earned coins for winning, this system could work, but as it is, do-overs are too frequent. One thing SPR is not, is passive: the computer AI is set on kill most of the time.

When SPR does get to down-'n'-dirty kart racing, the game shows its true colors. The combination of long, complex courses, a serious array of genuine South Park weapons, infectious and crude remarks ("I'm gonna chop off your weenie, put it on some bread and feed it to Kenny!" spews Cartman) and a robust engine, equate to a decent South Park/racing combo experience. And once you open up all of the courses for some uninterrupted arcade racing, and begin to pile on hidden characters (the whole friggin' mountain town is in here), South Park Rally becomes a somewhat likeable straight kart racer.

When the dust settles (and the poo and vomit) I understand the implementation of the additional adventure modes (after Mario Kart and Crash Team Racing, there is certainly little room to bring on the clones) but wonder whether people will brave them long enough to unlock the true racing they're after. GR



- GOOD ENGINE. ALMOST NO CLIPPING
- HAPHAZARD GAMEPLAY ABOUNDS
- GOOD MUSIC, SFX, AND VOICE
- IT'S VERY DIFFERENT, AND A BIT ON THE HARD SIDE

REPUBLIC SAYS... THE SOUTH PARK FAN IN ME SAYS YES, YES! WHILE THE REVIEWER IN ME SAYS THIS GAME MAY GET KICKED IN THE NUTS BY CRITICS.

C

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NOX

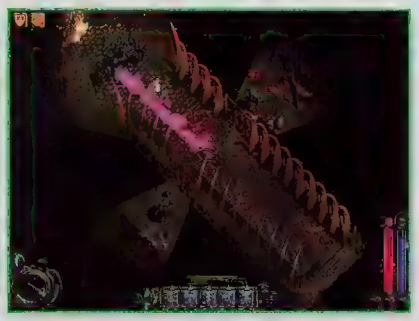
PC CD ROM A-

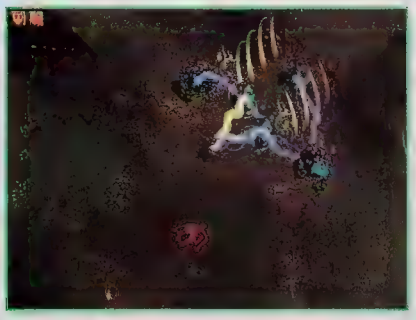
• reviewed by j.r. haugen • developer: westwood • publisher: ea • available: now

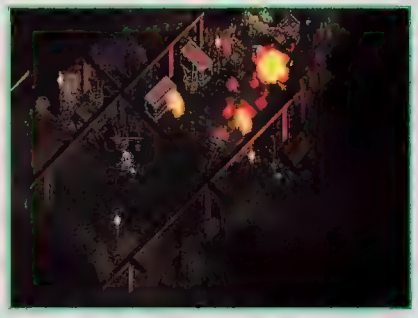
Westwood has a habit of bringing out really good games. The company is responsible for Dune 2/2000, Command & Conquer, and the Legend of Kyrandia series, and now they give us Nox. Nox, at first glance, looks like a standard Diablo clone, but it is so much more. The game is set up with you, a piece of trailer-park trash, getting sucked into your television and into the world of Nox. Depending on the class you choose (warrior, wizard, or conjurer), you have different paths to follow to reach the same goal: defeating the evil sorceress Hecubah. The control is quite simple: click the mouse and wield your weapon. Things get only slightly more complicated with the use of magic and special abilities, so it's really easy to focus on what you're doing, be it killing monsters or, well, killing monsters. That's essentially what Nox is all about, and this is highlighted in the multiplayer mode.

The graphics are amazing, including spectacular particle effects. One feature players will immediately notice is the character's visibility, which is limited to exactly what the character sees. If it's in front and to the sides, he can see it. If it's behind him, it's all black. The interesting thing about this is that you can look into windows and see what's inside. It also adds to the surprise when monsters come around corners you can't see past.

With solid gameplay and graphics for both single and multiplayer modes, Nox is a really fun game that delivers the goods. GR





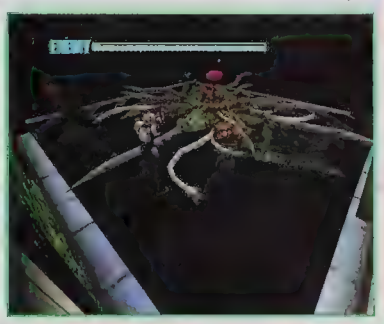


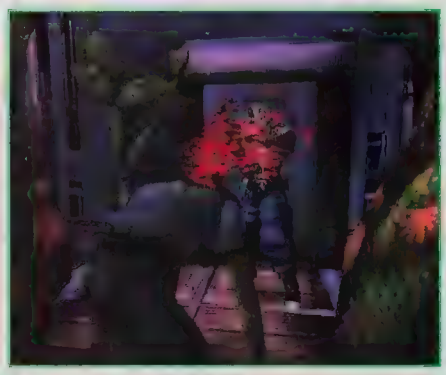
CARRIER

C+

• reviewed by b. fiechter • developer/publisher: jaleco • available: now

I try to review games based on their own merits, putting aside comparisons with similar games. But with Carrier, an action horror title set in the interesting confines of an aircraft carrier, the easiest way to illustrate the game's shortcomings is by contrasting it to everything that Resident Evil—the game's obvious inspiration—does so dramatically better.





Both games have mutated humans for conflict. But Carrier's sailors, infected by a parasitic organism that has been brought aboard the ship, are uninspired, create a tenuous web of tension, and exhibit uninteresting characteristics.

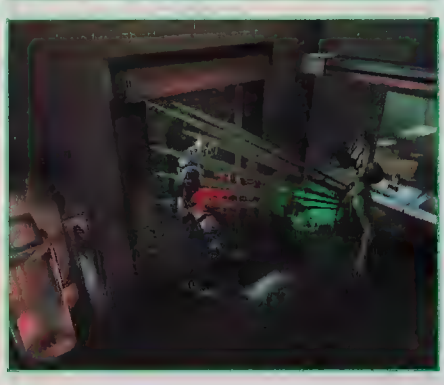
Both games require you to solve puzzles. In Carrier, the puzzles seem obligatory rather than placed in the game for enhancement, and they are too sparse; the game emphasizes find-the-key gameplay.

The action is straightforward, by the numbers, aim and shoot. In Resident Evil, your heart pounds when you are confronted; in Carrier, tension is built when you fumble with the sloppy controls.

Moody visuals: shared by both games, but Carrier's atmosphere is contrived, and the game looks sterile and uninspired.

In Resident Evil, the action is superbly framed, and the use of cinematic sequences only further draws you in. Carrier, try as it may, fails much more than it succeeds: the camera is jerky, poorly positioned, and scenes are incompetently staged.

Carrier is by no means a bad game. Using the Resident Evil blueprint, it's collected most of the pieces, but just doesn't know how to properly put them together. GR



CHU CHU ROCKET

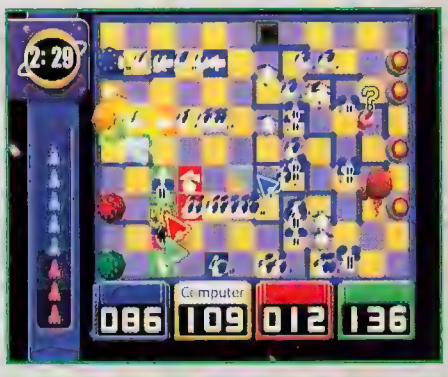
B+

• reviewed by m. hobbs • developer: sonic team • publisher: sega • available: march

As the first game to be playable online for the American Dreamcast, the domestic release of Chu Chu Rocket carries with it a rather hefty significance, as it may be the first online gaming experience for many players. It is perhaps a slightly odd choice considering the market, but there are undoubtedly few multiplayer games as fun and addictive as this one.

Chu Chu fever already swept through the GR offices when the import version made the rounds a couple of months ago. Everyone fell in love with its simple, deceptively strategic gameplay and wildly amusing visual style. For those out of the loop, the object of the game is to guide single-minded mice into your waiting rocket by placing one of three directional arrows in their path. The player with the most mice in his or her rocket at the end of the round wins. Simple enough, yes? The real fun stems from the different power-ups available throughout the round. Chosen at random when special mice enter your rocket, these power-ups can slow down or speed up the action, send streams of mice all over the screen (or into one particular rocket), or unleash a deadly horde of big orange cats. These felines follow your arrows too, and if one ends up in your rocket, it explodes, destroying copious amounts of mice from your cache. In the Japanese version of the game, these power-up events were accompanied by this ridiculously cute and high-pitched female voice screaming "Chu Chu Fever!" or "Neko(cat) Present!" and it was a hugely entertaining part of the game. Naturally, these delights have been unnecessarily dropped from the U.S. version, and we're left with the generic cries of "Mouse Mania." Oh well.

So as a two- to four-player game, Chu Chu succeeds marvelously, but what of the play over the net? I'm afraid I can't really say. Though Sega did have a server up that was hosting games, the system had yet to be optimized, and a rather gruesome delay in arrow placement made the game difficult to enjoy. I've been assured that the final system will be free of lag, and I hope Sega follows through on this promise. With or without perfect net play, at the very least this is a four-player game that everyone must try. GR

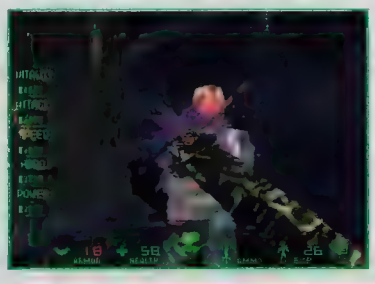


DAIKATANA

reviewed by j.r. haugen • developer: ion storm • publisher: kemco • available: now

C

It's a strange feeling playing a game that has been in the making for four years. Remember that five years from now, the next Zelda game will be out – just imagine the expectations there will be for that one. After four years, you expect something very special, considering that Daikatana is a game coming from John Romero, the creator of Doom, essentially the father of the genre. It's kind of sad that Daikatana, while not especially bad, just does not stand out much from other first-person shooters these days. The graphics are hi-res courtesy of the RAM pak, the story is more than you usually get for such a game, and there are character ability improvement elements as well. You travel through different time periods (ancient Greece and Scandinavia, future Japan, and somewhat modern San Francisco), which makes for a good change in level architecture and scenery.



The multiplayer mode leaves something to be desired, but in general the single game is passable. The end result, though, is a game that can't compete in today's environment of GoldenEyes and Perfect Darks. With any luck, the PC version will make up for it. If the N64 version is any indication, though, the PC one will just look like time has passed it by. GR

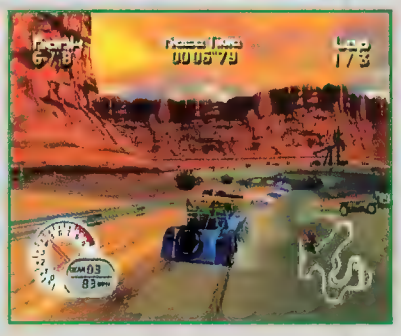
ROADSTERS

• reviewed by m hobbs • developer: player 1 • publisher: titus • available: now

C-

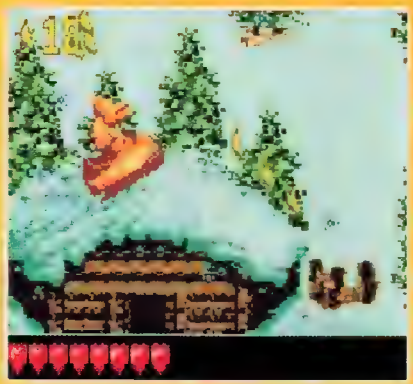
I've said it before, and now I'm forced to say it again: The Dreamcast has too many driving games. Though I could stomach a steady stream of Sega Rallys and Sega GTs to no end, few games are of this caliber, and the end result is a vast sea of mediocre to good racers. The Dreamcast version of Roadsters falls somewhere between good and mediocre, strong in places, off in others.

For starters, it offers a truly awkward mix of real licensed cars and fake look-alikes, and this odd mismatched theme carries over to the gameplay. On the one hand, you've got some real cars and a hint of realism, but then you've got these wild tracks with swirling tornadoes and erupting volcanoes, spilling burning rocks all over the track. I just don't buy this. The idea could have worked if the gameplay was up to the challenge and was more satisfying, but sadly it is not. The control is frustrating, somehow managing to be both overly sensitive and unresponsive at the same time, and the collision system between cars and roadside scenery feels glitchy and is unrefined. The game's one saving grace is that it looks fairly good in spots, with some impressive backgrounds and decent car models, but it's not enough—not when there are so many other driving games to choose from. GR

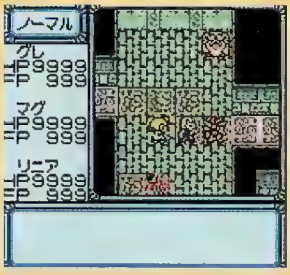


dinky kong & dixie kong dev: rare/pub: nintendo japan/avail: now reviewed by d. halverson In Japan, as in America, the Gameboy is huge. GB games rank in the top five on a regular basis. Diddy Kong & Dixie Kong hit Famitsu's Top 20 in seventh place the week it debut. The game, which now thankfully carries the GB Color-only brand, is of course based on Rare's third installment for the SNES, and besides the absence of parallax and its muted color scheme, it's nearly as good. Rare's tried and true formula for platforming success is in full effect. In the solid platforming levels it's all about head boppin', while searching for the letters to spell Kong and the bonus barrel. In the underwater portions of the game, which feel remarkably good on the small screen, the emphasis is on dodging, and in the portions where the screen is moving you along as you ride a vehicle, timing is everything. All of the characters from the SNES game are here as well, from Popy the parrot to Spinko the spider.

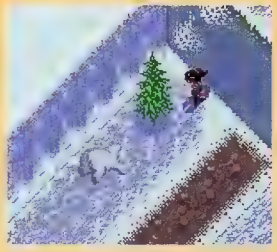
Graphically, although the animation is impressive all around, I did find the colors somewhat lacking which is my only grievance with DK & DK. Each character is relegated to one hue and some of the backgrounds are very washed out. I'm sure the GBC's pony power is going instead to the sprites and animation, however, so this is to be expected. DK & DK is a must-have import GBC release, as currently it is available here only as a cross compatible game. **B+**

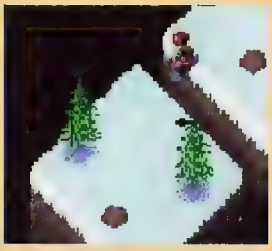


evolution dev: sting/pub: esp/avail: now japan previewed by d. halverson You've just got to love the Neo Geo Pocket right now. Metal Slug X and Magician Lord are on the way, and the game before you, Evolution, just hit in Japan, which means it should debut Stateside in no time flat. SNK has been 100 percent on the ball regarding localization. Based on Sting's popular Dreamcast game, which is currently enjoying its first sequel in Japan, Evolution is a random dungeon RPG starring the already familiar human Swiss Army Knife (and legendary adventurer) Mag Launcher. The NGP game takes place in the same locale as the original, although the quest itself is somewhat different. We'll have a full review next month. Now if someone would just make us a light...



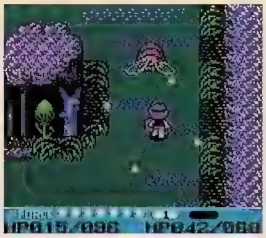
cool boarders dev/pub: uep systems/avail: spring previewed by e. fear Another snowboarding game is on its way to another system, this time for NGPC. Rather than the over-the-shoulder view, UEP opted for an isometric view, and will include two game modes: Free Ride and Survival. Free Ride gives you a health meter, and you rack up points for tricks while losing health for hitting objects, and when your health reaches zero, you're done. Survival is a timed run down a randomly generated course, so your reaction times have to be razor-sharp. A link-up mode will be included, so you can challenge your friends to runs down the same slope. The Japanese version should be out by the time you read this; look for a U.S. review soon.

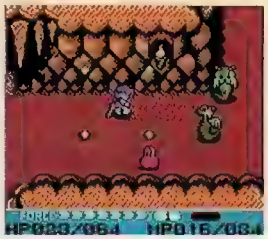


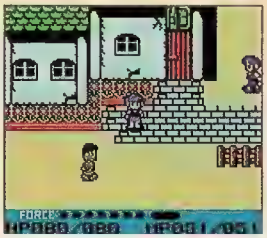


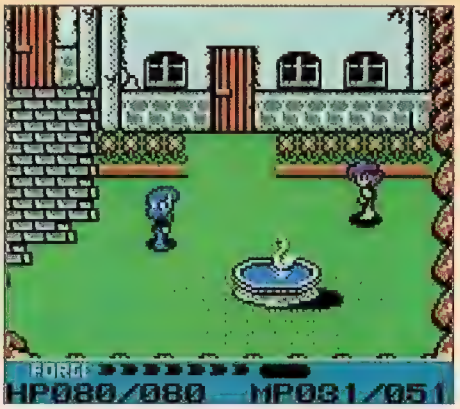
crystalis dev: nst/pub: nintendo/avail: june previewed by e. fear Nintendo's NST seems hellbent on creating a name for themselves, and this upcoming version of SNK's 1990 NES classic will certainly help them in this goal. While the similarities to the Game Boy Zelda are apparent, this is no ripoff. You'll find yourself on a modern-day post-apocalyptic quest across ten worlds to find the four mystical swords that can be combined to recreate the fabled Sword of Crystalis, which you'll then use to destroy the evil sorcerer Draygonia. Within this basic (but meaty) framework, you'll build up your character's health, fighting skills, and magic power, and acquire items, additional weapons, and magic spells (which will allow you abilities like flying, healing, and morphing into other characters).

Although NST has started with the original game's code, they are working hard to increase the detail of the characters and backgrounds, and have pledged to tighten up some of the pieces that SNK didn't have the time or ability to do in the original. And word has it that the original game was to have a much more spectacular ending; NST plans to include this as well. Either way, we're ready for this game to eat much of our free time soon.

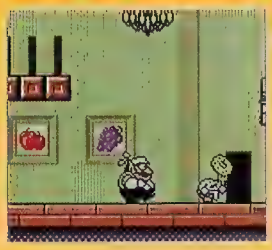




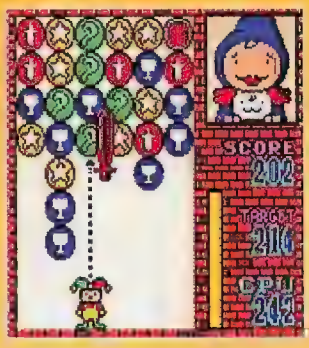


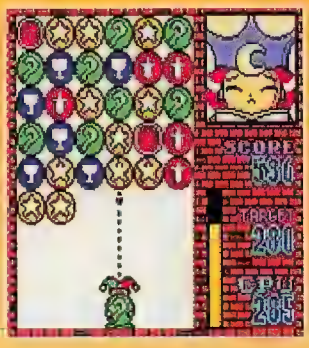


warioland 3 dev/pub: nintendo/avail: may previewed by e. fear After Nintendo's respectable colorization of Warioland 2, they've elected to make the new sequel GB Color only, and take advantage of the additional power it promises. Details are still slow coming out of Nintendo, but we do know this new cart will dole out 25 levels, some of which are hidden, with a memory feature probably similar to Super Mario Bros. Deluxe. Like Warioland 2, Wario can't be killed, but the baddies do affect him in different ways: fire causes him to run with a flaming butt, cold turns him into a block of ice, and bee stings make him balloon up and float up into the air. We're looking forward to seeing how the additional processor power of the GBC is used to affect the overall game. You'll be the first to know when we get the scoop.



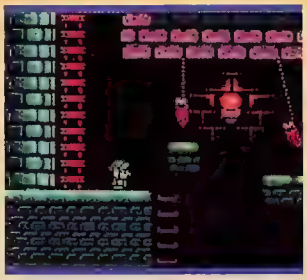
magical drop dev: data east/pub: snk avail: now reviewed by e. fear Similar to Puzzle Bobble (or Bust A Move) and with its roots in Tetris, Magical Drop casts you as a manic jester trying to stave off the onslaught of colored balls raining down. Link up three of the same color, and they pop. And if you've played your cards right (or your balls), more will pop as the remaining balls settle in. There are a variety of special effects and such to add to the eye candy, but the real treat is playing another person in link-up mode. Skills and planning will soon have your opponent cursing your ancestors, but a couple of well-placed shots can turn the tables insanely quickly. If puzzle games are your bag, this one's a must have. **B**

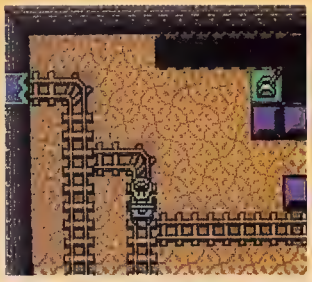


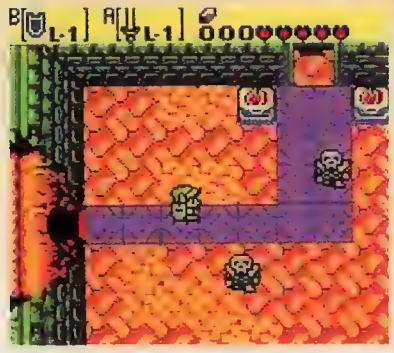


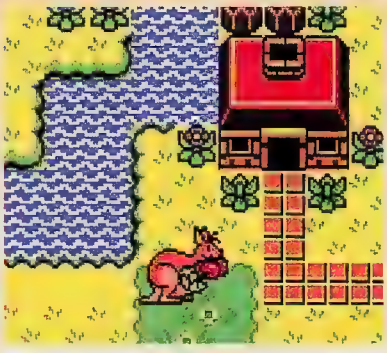
legend of zelda: the tale of power dev: capcom/pub: nintendo/avail: july (u.s.) previewed by e. fear Ganon's back, and this time he's kidnapped Princess Zelda and the Triforce of Power. This first in a new trilogy of Zelda games for GBC takes the series to the new level, and although many things are the same—top-down-ish perspective, playing as the hero Link, finding items and clues while journeying around a variety of lands—it is the new bits Nintendo is adding in that will add extra value. Link meets two new friends in this quest—Ricky the Kangaroo and Maple the witch—who become integral to completing the quest, and new items like the Rod of the Four Seasons, which allow Link to shift the season of land he's at in order to solve certain puzzles.

In planning this trilogy of adventures, Nintendo has plans to make the save data from one game to be used in the other games, so that circumstances in one game could help or hinder your progress in the others. How this will be accomplished has yet to be announced, but Nintendo, with the help of outsourced developers Capcom (who'd have thunk!), will undoubtedly end up with another classic we'll be revisiting for years to come.



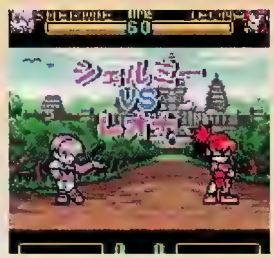






snk gal's fighters dev: yumekobo/pub: snk/avail: now reviewed by e. fear SNK is creating quite the respectable library of fighting games, and although this is by no means their best effort, its novelty is worth looking into. As the title suggests, this cart holds a bevy of fighting babes from SNK games, past and present, including three hidden characters (one who appears as a playable character for the first time here). Only a single-character, best-of-three mode is provided, although there is an SNK-style item collect system that serves to beef up your fighter which adds to the action.

Still, this game remains mostly a novelty, although according to our resident guru of such things, the fight with the final boss may make worth the purchase of the game in itself–but he refuses to give up any more details. **B-**



I would bet good money that Smackdown will sell more copies in the States than the best RPG, driving game, or any other title the PlayStation has to offer this year. It's a bit disturbing to know, but the people want wrestling games. And while I don't watch or follow the television drama, I do find myself enjoying this game tremendously. The talent at Yuke's have outdone themselves, treating us to their most ambitious effort yet. I'm not just talking cosmetically either, since the game uses some great technical tricks throughout.

The initial menu is multi-layered, providing just about every option you could want or imagine. In fact, you could easily spend a few hours experimenting and figuring out all of the features the game holds. Once you have familiarized yourself and get a game started, you'll be witness to some of the best character introductions seen in a wrestling title. The player models are solid and look great, even when up close.

The control and response of the game are unlike any other wrestling game on the PlayStation, and everything is instantaneous and moves without a hitch. A single button press will result in different attacks depending on the fight situation (i.e., opponent is facing away from you, you are getting up from the mat, etc.). This eliminates the guesswork when trying to figure out exactly how to perform a particular move.

The most impressive aspect of the game is the camera work. Even while focused on the large, agile wrestlers, the background crowd stretches out and up delivering a true sense of being inside a sports arena. Along with this look are real-time lighting effects. Stadium lights coupled with camera flashes illuminate the wrestlers and shift the shadow each one casts. It's very impressive and beautifully presented.

On top of the great ring presentation, the game will take you into the bowels of each arena, where, as fans know, most of the excitement unfolds.

Above: The arena action is furious! Just check out the crowd, the lighting, the shadows... the atmosphere! Below: You can take the fight out of the ring, and pummel your opponent in private, if you're into that sort of thing. Below left: One of the many menu features, in this case making your own wrestler. And the gals get it on in a cage match!

Matches may start in the ring, but by no means do they have to end there. You can lure your opponent into the back lobby, the underground parking lot and even the boiler room, all represented with the same visual integrity of the squared circle.

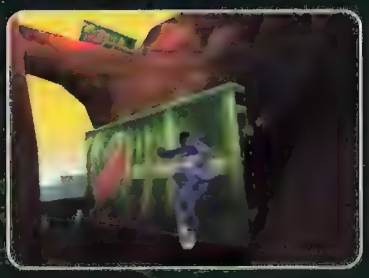
Yuke's approach to emulating American professional wrestling is stellar. The balance between all of these great qualities set a standard I don't foresee being touched on the dated PS hardware. The only improvement I could dream of is scripted voice dialog for the backstage confrontations. **GR**

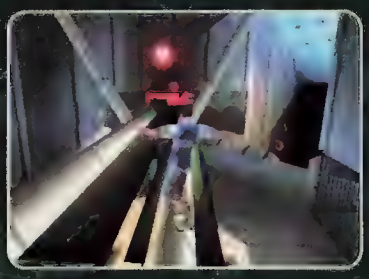
gamers' republic sports '00

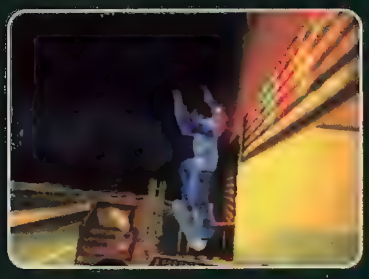
WWF SMACKDOWN

developer: yukes publisher: thq available: now

There is no way to cushion the obvious: Pro Skater on the N64 is about 30 percent slower than the PlayStation game that spawned this conversion. The only reason I mention this is because it will affect veterans and newbies alike. For the sages, you will struggle to get your favorite skater to complete some of the nicer tricks you have wired, and to the first-timers, you will encounter a false sense of excitement compared to what is experienced on the PS, making you wonder what all the talk was about. The game still moves at a tolerable speed, but not enough to generate constant tension.







As a conversion goes, the game still holds true to the Neversoft masterpiece in terms of gameplay and control, but it is missing some of the subtle visuals. Video screens have become static billboards, particle effects have become exaggerated and less realistic, and the intro and endings have become real-time sequences. Nothing too important in the grand scheme of things, and I only raise these points because I am an avid patron to the game.

Overall, the game does what it should: keep the feel of the original. The developers have done an admirable job and will make N64 owners very happy. GR

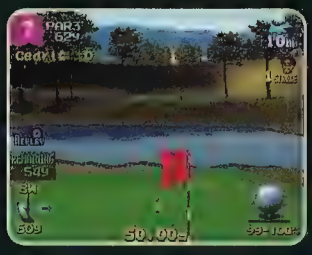
gamers republic sports '00

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

developer: edge of reality publisher: activision available: april

B

The appeal of the first Hot Shots golf game must have lead to a checkered fan base. Sure, almost everyone enjoyed the no-nonsense interface, play mechanics, and feel of the game, but the cool SD characters must have turned off some. I only say this because I find no other reason to why SCEA would scrap the Japanese character designs and substitute a more corn-fed group of swingers.



As far as gameplay goes, it has been slightly tweaked, making your round of skins more efficient. A loosened swing meter makes it easy for anyone to have a good time and not get frustrated. All of the typical play modes are included, and new courses and characters open as you win tournaments. Some of the hidden characters include favorites like Gex and Sir Dan from MediEvil fame, which will undoubtedly compel gamers to keep playing until they have unlocked all of the extra goodies.

Hot Shots 2 maintains the formula that made the original so highly acclaimed. Those looking for an accurate representation of golf with inviting play mechanics will not go wrong by picking this one up. GR

gamers' republic sports '00

HOT SHOTS 2

developer: clap hanz publisher: scea available: may

B

This move is embarrassing, but not at all surprising, coming from Acclaim: take a sub-par engine used for another dated wrestling game and port it straight over to create an "all new" experience. Yeah, ok. What we have here is the hellish engine and play mechanics found in WWF Attitude and a hack job of introducing a new cast of characters onto the screen.

From the opening sequence it is obvious that this game is all about severely brutalizing your opponent and gawking at the half-naked female characters as they are put into compromising positions—two things, other than the lack of fun, that make me uncomfortable playing the game.

Players will find all sorts of foreign objects to cripple his/her opponent with. Bats, ladders, shovels and the standard cheese-grater are all at hand for the sake of punishing and ultimately defeating your foe. For the truly sado-masochist crowd, caged matches and barbed wire matches are available too—novel ideas that become passe well before a match is over.

Let's hope Acclaim doesn't plan to continue this series in the same fashion next year. The hardcore antics deserve faster-paced action and more responsive controls. GR

gamers' republic sports '00

ECW: HARDCORE REVOLUTION

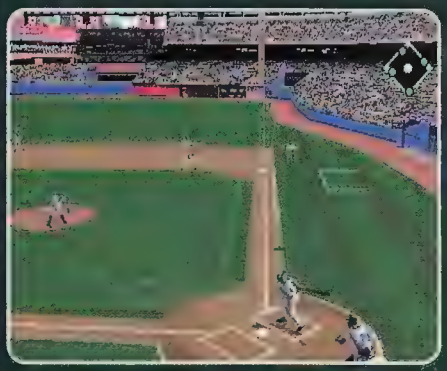
developer/publisher: acclaim available: may

C-

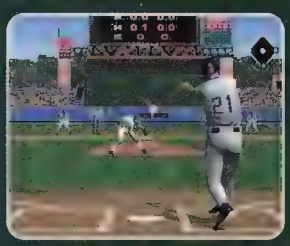
It's that time of year again and EA is ready to hit a couple of shag flies with the help of baseball's greatest players. That's right, a new MLBPA Big Challenge Mode has been included that will allow players to use Cy Young, Willie Mays and Babe Ruth, among others, against some of today's best—a great feature for purists young and old.

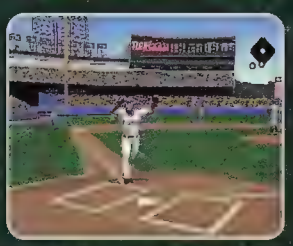
If you are like me and just want to be able to enjoy a game of video baseball, there are things here to compel you to play often, namely the presentation and camera logic. The player models, animations and scripted situations, like arguing with the umpire, are great and add a lot of personality to the game.

When on the diamond, a new fielder's point-of-view adds a refreshing feeling of excitement when trying to track a high fly ball, and introduces a new perspective on the typical isometric camera that follows a hit in all the games to date.



There hasn't been any glaring AI problems that I've run into yet, but be assured I'll go through a few seasons by the time I review the game; who knows what I'll find. As it stands, Triple Play is very nice indeed. GR





gamers republic sports '00

TRIPLE PLAY 2001

developer/publisher: electronic arts available: may

No one could have predicted that a skateboarding game would be the next big thing for developers to create. Alas, thanks to the success of one particular title, that's what is happening. This effort, being handled by Sony, is proving that if you can't top it, copy it. In fact, Grind Session uses so many traits introduced by Neversoft, I am surprised Sony can call it their game. The button configuration and commands are the same, level objectives are embarrassingly identical, and some levels are heavily influenced as well.

One big draw Sony is shooting for is 30 fps, and it seems level design has been stilted to accommodate the frame rate; the three levels I played through were small and cluttered with obstacles. This decision may cut into the replay factor, for many may get tired of the small environments. A plus is that Sony has included a nice collection of moves, though during the time I had to play the game, many seemed mishandled.

There are professional and fictional characters to choose from, each equipped with different signature moves. The game also has a lot of unnecessary product advertisements, which makes me wonder what Sony's strategy is: to make a fun game or solicit licenses for the sake of eating up their exclusivity? Regardless, I am looking forward to seeing and playing a more complete version of Grind Session. **GR**

gamers republic sports '00

GRIND SESSION

developer/publisher: scea available: may

In what appears to be an effort to out-do Midway, Electronic Arts hijacked a zamboni and drove it straight into a toughman contest to create a no-frills hockey game. Rock the Rink is strictly for arcade-like enjoyment, offering a dozen or so four-man teams. That said, don't look for complex defensive strategies or strong AI. Instead, be ready to score lots of goals.

To help you with the scoring melee, players are able to perform superhuman acts to shake a defender. Tricks like the corkscrew, tornado, helicopter and leapfrog will aid in increasing your score more often than not. On the other skate, when on defense, you will be able to knuckle up and body-slam the other team. These attributes are what automatically made me look for the Midway logo.

A great inclusion is the NHL challenge mode. It allows you to take any one of the fantasy teams and play them against a real NHL team. Well, at least four players from the particular NHL team. The AI is still loose and easy to figure out, but playing against an actual team make return visits more interesting, especially for NHL fans. **GR**

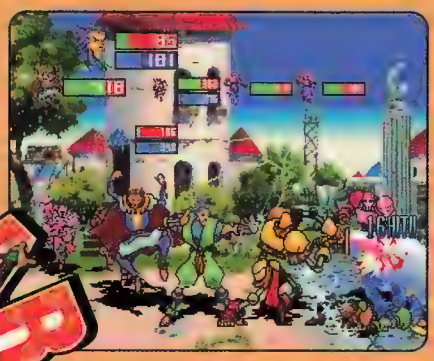
gamers' republic sports '00

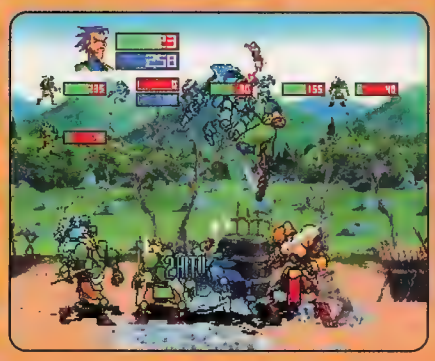
ROCK THE RINK

developer/publisher: electronic arts available: may

GUARDIAN HEROES

[publisher] saga
[genre] action
[system] saturn
[year] 1996

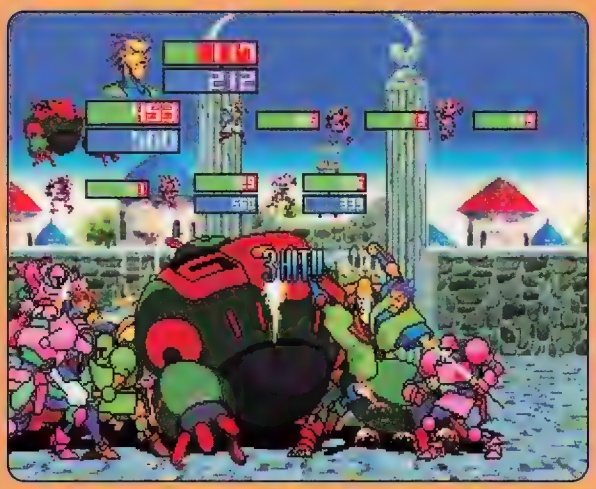


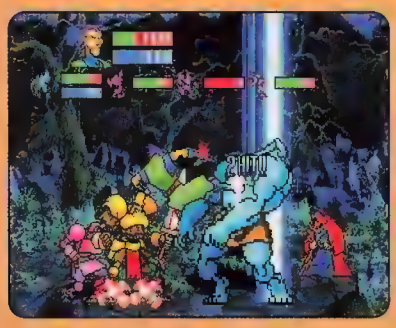


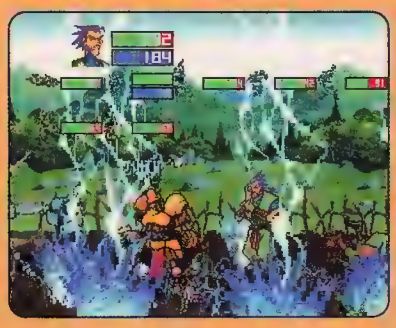
Radiant Silvergun. Gunstar Heroes. Guardian Heroes. Take your pick for Treasure's finest. Each game represents the very best of its respective genre and the inimitable developer pushing hardware to a breaking point, but my vote goes to the Saturn masterwork Guardian Heroes. One part stupendous hand-drawn artwork, one part apoplectic action, one part role-playing, one part Treasure, the game was the best of traditional game design elevated to previously unseen heights by a 32-bit system meant for just such a game.

The intense blend of magic, martial arts and swordsplay from the cast of three superbly animated and endlessly responsive characters comprises the gameplay of Guardian Heroes, as combat is waged through medieval landscapes of richly drawn forests, towns and castles. So chaotic is the swarm of enemies onscreen at a time that often—especially in a two-player outing - the action becomes a blur. Indeed, there is no shortage of energy in the game, but its true greatness comes from the little extras, like the ability to allocate experience points, propulsive music, and an interesting story that allows you to choose the outcome as well as embark on multiple paths at key plot points.

Games like this—brimming with wonderfully traditional 2D design qualities—are quickly becoming a distant memory. It's important, now and again, to go back and see where we once were. Guardian Heroes is a game that will forever impress. **B. FIECHTER**







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world republic

電気製品

[i] Due to popular demand, we've reinstated our Japanese release date listings and highlighted in red the ones we think you should consider. See you next time!

World Republic Preview • developer/publisher **climax entertainment** • available in japan **summer**

super runabout

Kan Naito and company make a run for the new Crazy Taxi contingency. We're waiting...

Super Runabout will inevitably draw comparisons with Crazy Taxi, even though you're delivering items rather than dropping off fares. And rightfully so: the gameplay is much the same. Barreling down two-way streets with no regard for persons or property in order to complete a task is a satisfying way to pass the time. In terms of pure arcade satisfaction and eclectic zeal, SR doesn't stand much of a chance of coming out on top. But in terms of physics, environments and overall gameplay, SR may just give the taxi boys a run for their money.

Kan Naito and Climax Entertainment (not to be confused with Climax Graphics of Blue Stinger fame) introduced this series—somewhat of a surprise given their roots in action and role-playing—back in '97 with a surprisingly entertaining PlayStation effort. Packed with quirky little cars and loads of gameplay, the game was picked up for the U.S. market by ASCII (as Felony 11-79) and actually created a little buzz. Although Runabout 2 for the PlayStation (see GR issue 21) has not been picked up for domestic release, this is most likely a timing issue, as Sony clears the path for PS2. We expect someone will bring Super Runabout over in the very near future. The game looks brilliant with eerily accurate San Fran landmarks like Lombard Street recreated with painstaking detail and, on the physics front, all you need to do is smash into a Sparkletts truck for a brilliant display of the Dreamcast's capabilities in the hands of qualified programmers. When the game is complete, look for a good amount of vehicles to control, the ability to play as the cops or the pursuee and at least 13 big environments to wreak havoc in as you munch into everything in your path and watch the realistic aftermath in complete glee. The music rips as well, in a Japanese-doing-American-rock sort of way. It's slightly embarrassing that they happen to do it better.

Kan Naito likens the comparison between Runabout 2 for PS and Super Runabout (for DC) to the difference between a Hollywood and a Hong Kong movie, but don't hold that against him. He obviously hasn't seen Wild Wild West yet. -D. HALVERSON

Japanese Games Release List: March/April 2000

PlayStation
3/2 Beat Mania Append 5th Mix *Konami*
3/16 Kisha de Go! *Taito*
3/23 Infinity *kid*
World Stadium 4 *Namco*
Sometime in March
Super Robot Wars *Banpresto*
Wizardry: DIMGUIL *ASCII*
Monster Farm Battle Card *Tecmo*
K1 Champion *Asmik Ace Ent.*
4/6 U-Sa *ArtDink*
Lattice *Nusite*
Tiny Bullet *SCEI*
4/13 Gaia Master *Capcom*
Oh! Bakyuun *Namco*
4/20 Jungle Explorer *Victor Interactive*
Rockman Dash 2 *Capcom*
4/27 Breath of Fire IV *Capcom*
Sometime in April
Wu Tang *Success*
Metal Slug X *SNK*
Option Tuning Car Battle *MTO*
Ray Crisis *Taito*
Devil Man *Bandai*

PlayStation 2
3/4 A-Train 6 *ArtDink*
Sky Surfer *Idea Factory*
Shogi *ASCII*
Billiard Master *Ask*
American Arcade *Astrol*
SF EX3 *Capcom*
Mahjong *Koei*
Kessen *Koei*
World Soccer *Konami*
Drum Mania *Konami*
Street Mahjong *Sunsoft*
Stepping Selection *Jaleco*
Fantavision *SCEI*
EX Billiards *Takara*
Golf Paradise *T and E Soft*
Ridge Racer V *Namco*
Eternal Ring *From Software*
3/23 I.Q. Remix Plus *SCEI*
3/30 Tekken Tag Tournament *Namco*
Sometime in March
Gekikukan Pro Baseball 1999
Morita Shogi *Shuki Enterprises*
4/1 O Story *Enix*
Sometime in April
Ever Grace *From Software*

Saturn
3/30 Final Fight Revenge *Capcom*

Dreamcast
3/2 Virtua Cop 2 *Sega*
3/9 Gun Bird 2 *Sega*
3/16 Puzzle Bobble 4 *Cyber Front*
3/16 Bikkuri Man 2000 *Sega Toys*
3/23 Twinkle Star Sprites *SNK*
Sentimental Graffiti *NEC*
Marvel vs. Capcom 2 *Capcom*
3/30 Pro Baseball DC Edition *Konami*
King of Fighters '99 Evolution *SNK*
Advanced Great Strategy *Sega*
Gungagan *Sega*
Get! Colonies *Sega*
4/6 Super Euro Soccer 2000 *Imagineer*
Sangokushi VI *Koei*
4/27 DDR 2nd Mix *Konami*

Nintendo 64
3/17 Top Gear Hyper Bike *Kemco*
3/23 Pro Baseball 2000 *Konami*
3/24 Kirby 64 *Nintendo*
4/7 Nintamaran Taro 64 *Culture Brain*
4/27 Legend of Zelda Gaiden *Nintendo*

64DD
April F-Zero Expansion Kit *Nintendo*
Mario Artist Polygon Studio

Game Boy
3/3 VS Lemmings *J Wing*
3/10 Medalot Card Battle *Imagineer*
3/17 RPG tsukool *ASCII*
Trick Boarder *Athena*
Hamster Paradise *Atlus*
Pocket Perfect Wrestler *J Wing*
3/21 Wario Land 3 *Nintendo*
3/23 Cyborg Guguro-chan *Konami*
Powerpro-kun Pocket *Konami*
3/24 Prince of Persia *Sun Soft*
Super Beedaman *Takara*
3/24 Saru Puncher *Taito*
3/30 Battle Fishers *Konami*
Pop'n Music GB *Konami*
World Soccer 2000 *Konami*
3/31 Arle's Adventure *Compile*
Sometime in March
Doraemon Memories *Epoch*
Macross 7 *Epoch*
DX Monopoly GB *Takara*
4/13 Monster Capsule GB *Konami*
4/27 Metal Gear Ghost Babel *Konami*
Hunter x Hunter *Konami*

Neo Geo Pocket
3/9 Metal Slug 2nd mission *SNK*
3/16 Gekka no Kenshi *SNK*
Cotton *Success*
4/27 Ogre Battle *SNK*

Wonderswan
3/9 Langrisser Millennium *Bandai*
3/16 Sennou Millennium *Bandai*
3/23 Final Lap 2000 *Bandai*
3/30 Pro Baseball Rookies *Jaleco*
Sometime in March
Super Robot Wars *Banpresto*
4/6 Sangokushi II *Koei*
Sometime in April
Pocket Fighter *Bandai*
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X

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World Republic Review • developer/publisher: kid • available: now (japan)

treasure striker

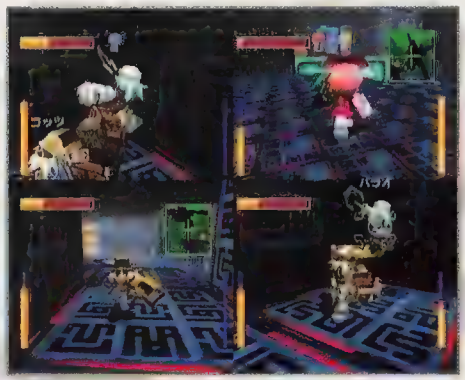
Treasure hunting never had it so good. Grab three friends and scurry for loot or have at the story mode solo...

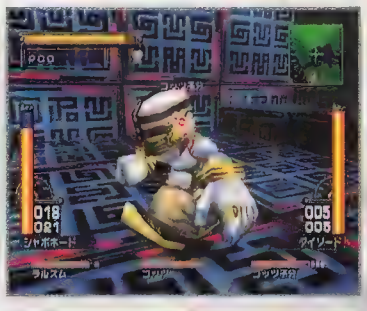
I love quirky little imports from small, unknown developers. Treasure Strike is no ardently planned, big-time, large-scale game; it's more of an in-between-meal snack. Here in the U.S., the land where everything is touted as "the next big thing," we could do with more clever deviations such as this.

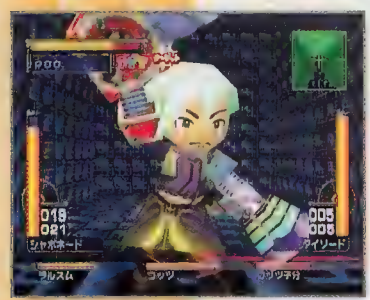
Alone or with up to four friends, Treasure Strike is thoroughly enjoyable. The goal of the game is simple—steal treasure to sell and attain more power—but the way in which you do so runs deep. You start off with a small close-range attack and shooting weapon, playing in medium-sized areas. You must scramble to find colored keys to open the colored chests throughout each area. If the other player finds something before you, you'll need to find him, blast him, grab his loot and search on. Chests contain a variety of items, from parts to upgrade your arms to treasures, which can later be sold for cash in one of the shops. Hidden randomly within each arena is that area's main treasure, which you must find and escape with, to win the level. Each area has three stages and a final treasure hunter whom you must outwit to gain access to the next area, after a visit to the guild (where a strange man in an even stranger mask seems to be running things). Once outside the action zone you can enter several shops where you can sell your stuff to upgrade, or purchase new items. You can even visit your personal tailor and outfit your character any way you'd like. Hair, robes, pants, shoes, hats, and even posture can be manipulated. As the game progresses, the plot thickens, as more treasure hunters challenge you, and the areas grow in size and complexity. Of course, the weapons at your disposal become more numerous, deadly, and strategically essential as well.

With any luck this highly addictive and simple yet very attractive-looking game will find a home here in the States. If not, I highly recommend Treasure Strike as an import purchase. See if you can talk your importer into including a translation though – the games menu's are a bit much to wrestle with. -D. HALVERSON

As you can see, Treasure Striker features a wide variety of characters. I made the one above myself. I bought him a big knife, a honkin' multicolored gun, and went for the cool green doo. He's a pretty happenin' little dude, wouldn't ya' say? He's an ass kicker too!







B-

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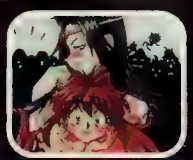
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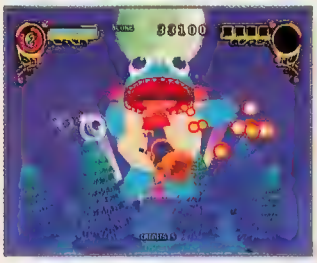
rainbow cotton

It's bright, it's cute, it's a polygonal Cotton. Pity the gameplay doesn't live up to the look...

The little witch shooter has gone all polygonal in Success' Rainbow Cotton, and the end result is a visually arresting, poorly playing 3D shooter.

At the heart of the problem is the severe lack of satisfaction in the actual shooting action. Though Cotton herself is this wonderfully crafted real-time character, replete with amazingly animated hair, she takes up such a huge portion of the screen that you literally cannot see what you're shooting at. And to make matters worse, when you actually do hit your target, it limply pops out of existence. There's no real feeling of power, and any shooter, regardless of its cuteness, must impart a satisfying feeling of destruction, and Rainbow Cotton fails this requirement horribly. And the lack of a turbo shot mechanism only works to highlight this feeling of impotence, as you've got to pump the fire button like mad just to get a weak stream of shots out.



And it's such a shame, because the game really has an appealing look to it. Bright, hi-res, candy-colored environments and twisted enemies perpetually fill your eyes to overflowing, and there are some really great and off-the-wall bosses along the way. But as much as Rainbow Cotton begs to be liked, all the charm in the world can't save it from its severely tepid gameplay. **-m. hobbs**

C-

World Republic Review • developer/publisher pulse interactive • available in japan now

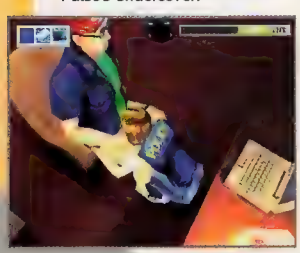
undercover

A game about a chick in a tight black dress that I don't like? Hmmm...

Undercover is an, uh...interesting game. From little-known Pulse Interactive, the game is best described as a hybrid attempting to re-create the magic of Resident Evil and Metal Gear Solid. Or at least it seems that's what Pulse was shooting for. They missed (ah hell, they couldn't hit the broad side of a barn), but than again, few companies have been able to successfully clone either said million seller. Not that Undercover doesn't have its moments; it definitely does. While some of the scenes look like hi-res PlayStation graphics, others impress, and the cinema portions are quite good, exhibiting great detail in the facial extremities.

The game's main problem lies in the character physics and control. Strafing is relegated to an awkward sideways hop, unless you ever so gently coax a gradual swagger, and although first- and third-person are offered, the camera cannot be manipulated up or down to look around. This makes the game's extensive sniping exhausting rather than entertaining. Between trying to get the chick to move right and the camera fixed, you end up wanting to shoot yourself half the time. In the game's defense, though, there are plenty of intriguing moments, as the story is integrated nicely, the environments are beset with impressive polygonal elements, and an exorbitant amount of hard-core brutality is in effect: the game pulls no punches when it comes to the graphic nature of murder. There's some pretty decent CG in store as well. If only they could have designed the characters better, and worked more on the camera system, Undercover could have been a solid title. Perhaps Pulse will nail one in the near future. They're definitely a company to watch. **-d. halverson**

Have the police blown this case wide open? Find out next time in Pulse's Undercover!



D+

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X

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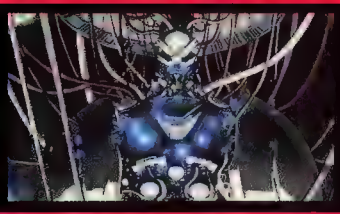

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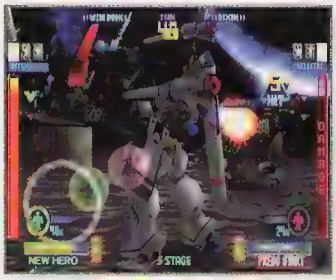
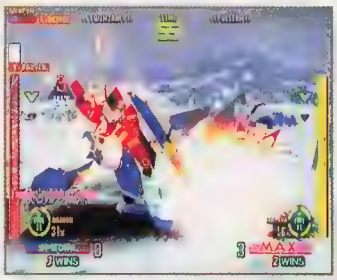
World Republic Review • developer/publisher: capcom • available in japan now

Kikaioh

Capcom's loving tribute to giant robot anime makes for a wildly entertaining one on one fighter





I absolutely adore this game, and I fell in love with it the moment I booted it up. Kikaioh begins with this absolutely killer intro that plays just like the opening to a weekly giant robot anime, complete with enthusiastically sung vocals and even an ending tag that shows Capcom as the sponsor of the "show." This floored me, though your results may vary.

Capcom has done something really interesting in the conception of this game. Heavily inspired by the classic giant robot aesthetic of Japanese animation, '70s onward, Capcom has lovingly created a cast of familiar yet wholly original mechs for this 3D fighter, and done so with an attention to detail that reveals a great adoration for the subject matter. The designers even went so far as to create individual logos, pilots, and matinee cards for each character, and if one didn't know better, would probably assume these were all culled from real animated series. In an odd way, this is almost more appealing than if the game actually had Great Mazinger or some of the other robots from which the game drew its inspiration.

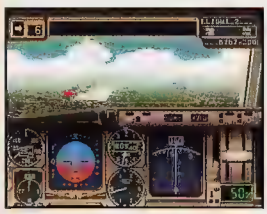
But even without an appreciation for the clever conception of the game, Kikaioh is still a blast to play, full of explosive, exaggerated attacks and simple, engaging fighting action. You move around with complete freedom in the wide-open playfields, dotted with tiny little buildings and trees (you're a giant robot, remember), and the game gives off a faint aroma of Power Stone at first play. But Kikaioh is less about cunning than it is about unleashing devastating attacks and watching with glee as your opponent is sent crashing and sliding to the ground, a trench of destruction in his or her wake.

An appreciation for giant robots certainly increases the delight of Kikaioh, but it's not a prerequisite for enjoyment. This game is cheap, simple fun any way you slice it, and it certainly makes up for the mediocre Star Gladiator 2 on Dreamcast. A U.S. release has not been announced as of press time, but as the arcade original saw a brief stint in arcades under the moniker Tech Romancer, there is every possibility that it will come out over here. **-m. hobbs**

B+

PlayStation Review

Does landing an airliner sound like fun? What if you had a big plastic flight controller with working throttle? Still not interested? Then stay far away from Taito's Jet de Go! (Let's go by Jet!), the latest in their travel simulators, joining the likes of Densha de Go! (Let's go by Train!). Using the big plastic flight grip, you've got to ferry passengers from airport to airport in Japan Airlines planes of all sizes, making takeoffs and landings, and even warning passengers when to put on their safety belts. Personally, I get a kick out of flying an airliner, feeling its great mass and touching it down on the tarmac with precision and care. But judging by the responses of my co-workers, this isn't likely to be a pleasure shared by many. Airline aviation buffs need only apply. **-m. HOBBS** **C+**



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World Republic Review • developer/publisher Sugar & Rockets/Sony • available in japan now

chase the express

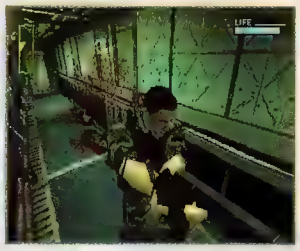
PlayStation

Murder on the Occident Express - "survival intrigue" on a train from St. Petersburg to Paris

The survival horror genre is soon going to need a new moniker, with games like Chase the Express coming out. To simplify what this game is, think Resident Evil on a train, and instead of zombies, you're killing masked terrorists. Mix in some elements from the movies *Mission: Impossible* and *Under Siege 2: Dark Territory*, and you're close.

The game takes place entirely on a train from St. Petersburg to Paris, and you must save the French ambassador from bad guys led by a Die-Hard-type Russian villain who talks like he has an obstruction in his mouth. This may seem a bit linear, going from train car to train car, but there is enough variety in the room design to keep it from becoming stale. While the graphics are not hi-res, they are strangely detailed. There is a fairly innovative combat system in place, but most of the enemy encounters are way too easy. My favorite part is that you have to go to the train's bathroom to save your game.

Chase the Express offers a little something new to the genre, and is worth playing if you want to deal with humans in your survival games. **-j.r. hauqen**



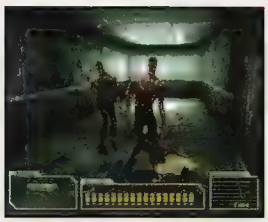
B-

PlayStation Review

biohazard gun survivor

Gun Survivor is an incredibly simplified GunCon version of BioHazard. Players are given infinite ammunition and unlimited inventory space, and puzzles are limited to finding keys to open doors. Using the GunCon, you control all the character movement, moving back and forth with the trigger while aiming away from the screen, and turning using the side buttons – extremely awkward. Even when zombies, lickers, and other familiar BioHazard baddies showed up, the action was sparse. Enemies only attack a few at a time, and the combat requires little skill.

Another blight on this game is the lack of interactive scenery. Only a few windows are destroyable; other than that your bullets pass through walls and obstacles like thin air. On the plus side, the game offers decent graphics and atmospheric music that's reminiscent of previous Biohazard games, and there are several weapons to exterminate your enemies with. However, these positives can't resurrect this dead game. **-C. HOFFMAN** C-



World Republic Review • developer/publisher namco • available in japan now

rescue shot bubibo

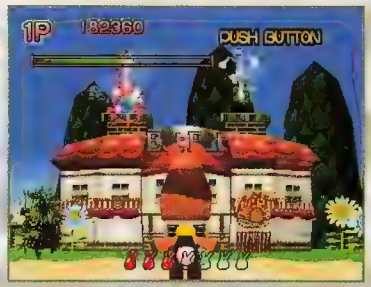
PlayStation

Namco comes up with another great use of the GunCon–protecting a really stupid rabbit

Namco could never be accused of pulling a "Super Scope" on their wonderful GunCon peripheral. They've actually supported the device, and with great fare like Time Crisis and Point Blank. Their latest Japanese release is another addition to the GunCon library, and it's about as different from the aforementioned games as one can imagine.

Rescue Shot Bu Bi Bo stars this dim-witted little rabbit, walking along oblivious to the dangers surrounding him. This poor little guy doesn't know what's going on, and you've got to help him by shooting away obstacles and enemies that lie in his path. You'll even have to shoot away harmful foods like poisonous mushrooms, because in his dense way, the little man will eat anything. And sometimes, you'll have to make him jump over objects and chasms, and to do so, you've got to place a well timed shot right on his little butt. This is cute stuff indeed, and a great idea for a GunCon game, as the little fellow encounters bosses and braves challenges like a row boat run before a chasing sea serpent, with the player controlling the boat's movement by shooting the outstretched oars.

Make no mistake: this is an easy game, but it's also a heck of a lot of fun, and a great excuse to point a plastic gun at a television screen. **-m. hobbs**



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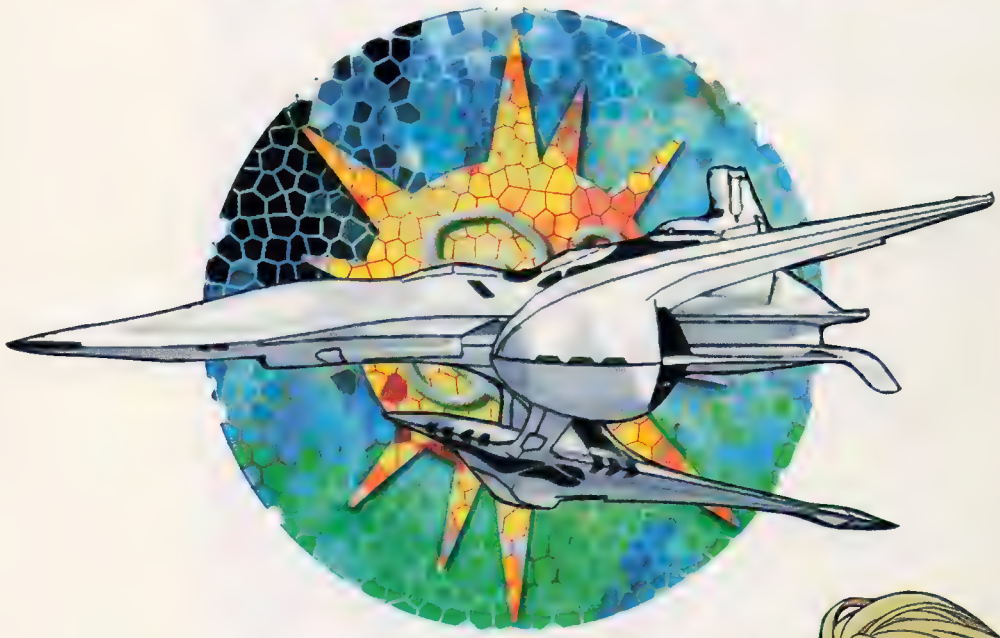

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TRIGUN

REVIEWED BY DAVE SMITH

•1998 NIGHTOW/SHONEN GAHO 2000 PIONEER
100 MINUTES•ENGLISH DUBBED

★★★★1/2 ACTION/DRAMA

Trigun is, at its core, the story of one man. He is a wanted man. He is an armed man. He is a dangerous man. But he is also a polite, whimsical, and slightly bemused man: he wanders his world with seemingly no comprehension of why it so badly wants to kill him.

There has never been anyone exactly like Vash the Stampede. His closest cousin is the legendary Justy Ueki Tylor, but while he shares the Messiah-like qualities that made Tylor our hero and savior, Vash possesses an awesome sense of style and humor that lifts him above and beyond even the Soyokaze no kancho. He is OUR ROLE MODEL~!, a mighty force of terrible and wondrous badasstitude.

Trigun's setting seems composed of equal parts *Gunnm* and spaghetti westerns: imagine a dusty saloon patronized by cyborg drifters, with ostrich-like alien mounts tied to the hitching post outside. This fusion allows elements drawn from all over the map—machineguns, vinyl LPs, spring-loaded cybernetic boomerangs, even insurance claims adjusters. Two agents perpetually tail Vash, tallying up the damages of his latest inadvertent cataclysm.

But before all of this, my love for this show came with the first seconds of the OP sequence, as the holy axe of Tsuneo Imahori thundered over gorgeous Madhouse animation. Imahori, who played guitar for Yoko Kanno's scores, fills the show with an amazing melange of musical forms: Latin rhythms, Western steel guitar, strange electronic dissonance, classical woodwinds, and others. But the best are the LOUD, BASSY, BRUTAL GUITARS OF ZEPPELIN-ESQUE VIOLENT DOOM. YES.

You doubt me? You accuse me of hyperbole? Go forth and see the *Trigun OP*. As the chords crank up, and Vash stands over you like an infernal god of death, you will understand. As the episodes progress, revealing more and more of this strange world's secret, you will become absorbed. You will also, lest the mood become a bit too heavy, laugh yourself stupid on multiple occasions. Despite the typically infuriating dub (Tsuru Hiromi, children. Leave her alone), I thank Pioneer profusely. After all, why would anyone buy this on VHS anyway? Give me dual-language DVD or give me death. Either way, give me *Trigun*.

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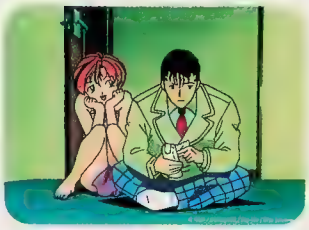
SAKURA DIARIES

REVIEWED BY DAVE SMITH

•2000 ADV FILMS

90 MINUTES•ENGLISH SUBTITLED

★★★1/2 ROMANCE



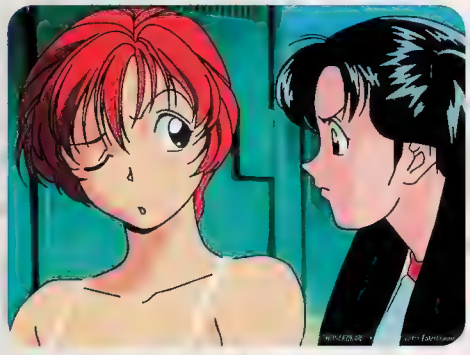
Upon receiving my copy of ADV's *Sakura Diaries* (aka *Sakura Tsuushin*), I briefly examined it, removed the cassette from its container, and spiked the cardboard sleeve to the nearest wall with my Spyderco Endura. I did this as an overt expression of my considerable disdain for the butcherous kludge of a logo and the demonically hackneyed dead dog's rancid vomit masquerading as box copy. Throughout history, men have died for lesser crimes against Art, and it angers me that our society, culture, and government have become so hindered by tired complacency that the perpetrators of such crimes are no longer broken on the wheel, drawn, quartered, and publicly burned.

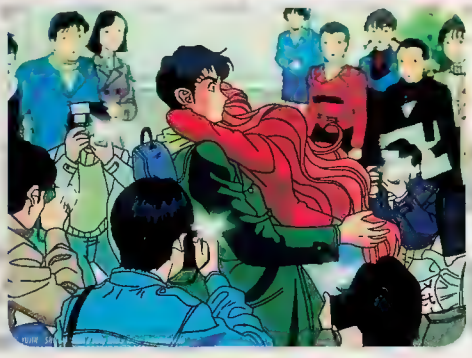
The most depressing thing about Sakura's god-awful packaging is that it gets me in the entirely wrong mood to enjoy it. One should not be uptight and potentially violent when watching this. It requires a calm attitude, an unimpaired sense of humor, and some willingness to accept a classic Idiot Plot.

The IP is defined as a plot which requires its characters to behave like idiots. Not all of them have to, though. If one is idiotic enough, he can power the whole works, and Sakura Tsuushin serves up the Greatest Idiot in the History of Anime—a bold statement, but none of the legendary idiots of old compare to Inabe Touma. In Tokyo taking his college entrance exams, he manages to entangle himself with a model, his eighteen-year-old cousin, cram school, and a university that won't admit him, while embarking on a romantic saga of infuriating and often frightening idiocy.

Perhaps it's missing the point to focus on Touma. He's just an idiot, and the model is just there to kick his idiocy into high gear. The real star is his cousin Urara, who harbors a crush on him from years before, and sets about trying to land him as soon as he arrives in Tokyo. He's too idiotic to notice, naturally, but to hell with him; Urara is a pleasant enough sight on her own. On the Defcon Cute Scale, she's somewhere between "full-scale SAC deployment" and "seal off NORAD, civilization is doomed." If finding a cartoon character attractive is a sign of impending mental collapse, which I believe it is, shove in those needles and turn off my forebrain, because I'll be happy to stare at her blankly for the rest of my days.

Touma exemplifies the idiocy of the plot, but Urara defines the character and look of the show. Yes, you could consider it soft-core, but it has a terribly pleasant, innocent quality to it. The animation and design are beautiful, based on the original manga by U-Jin (whose normally disturbing tendencies are restrained here), and the folk OP and ED are among my favorite pieces of music at present. Perhaps the reason the box riles me so is that we hardly ever see any adult anime that's actually worth watching. To throw Sakura Tsuushin in the same pigeonhole as the Kitty catalogue is tasteless, inaccurate, and a disservice to the mature consumer.





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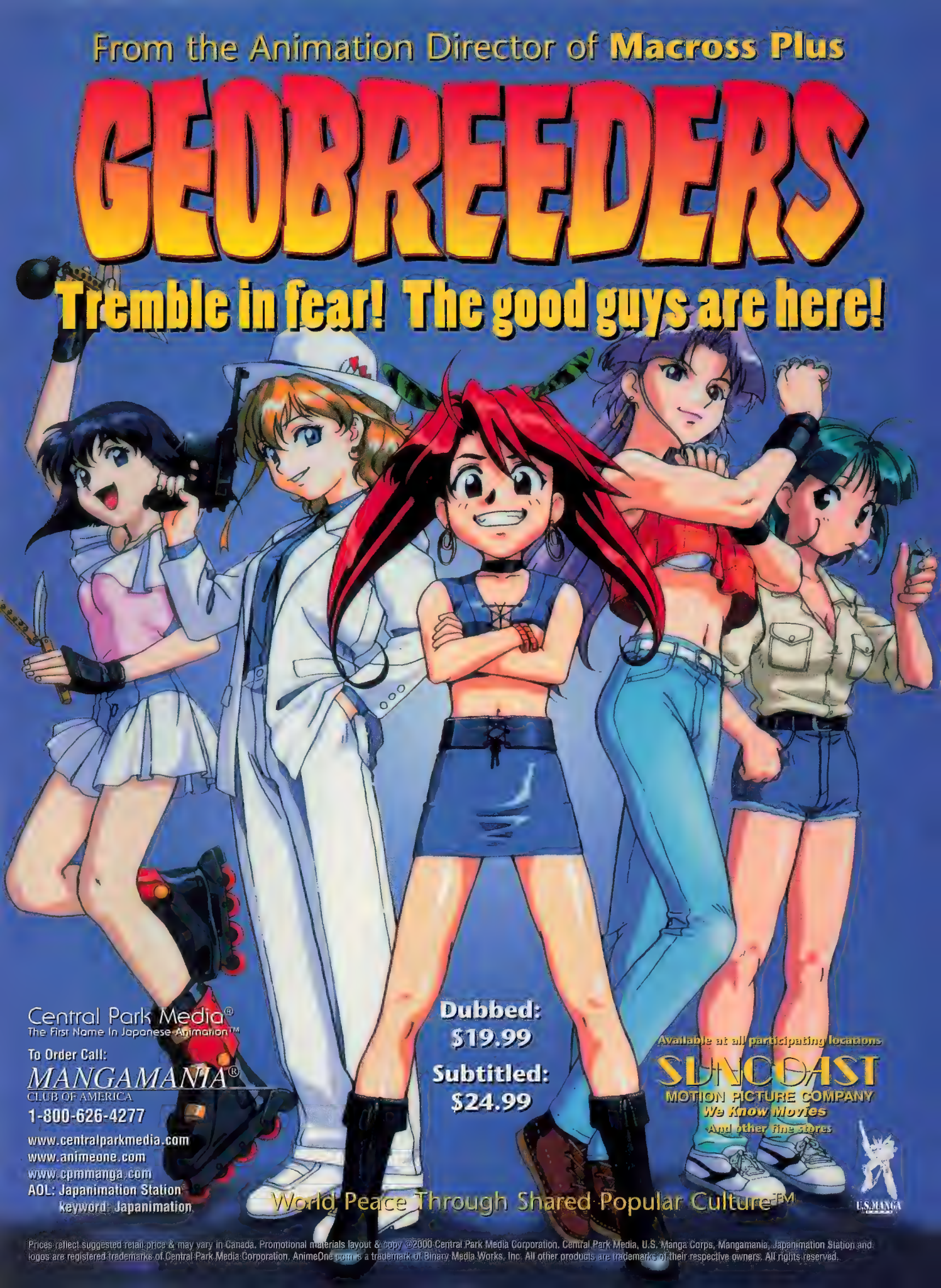

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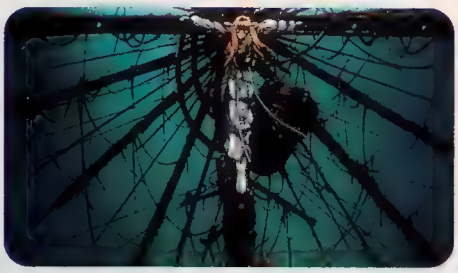


デジタル放送シス

X

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON

1996 CLAMP (JP) 2000 MANGA VIDEO (US)
98 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH

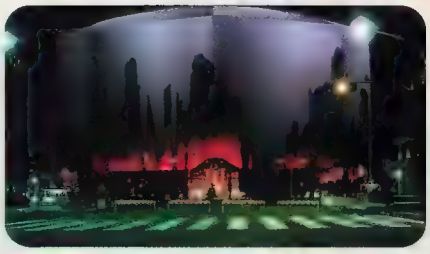
★★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

As Clamp's apocalyptic epic opens we find the lead, Kamui (kam-we), in a dream state, confronted by his dead mother. Amid a sea of flower pedals, she draws a beautifully decorated sword from within her body and, passing it to him, tells her beloved son that he must return to Tokyo —that he has been chosen by fate to fight for the city. As the sword enters Kamui's body, she bleeds into infinity as the viewer is ushered to a second dream, that of Kamui's beloved childhood girlfriend Kotari. In her vision she is confronted by what seems to be two of Kamui, and waking up, describes this dream to Kamui's closest friend, her brother Fuma. Six years prior to these revelations, Kamui left Tokyo to fulfill a prophecy that he could not speak of with Kotari and Fuma when they were children. But now, as he returns to Tokyo, that prophecy begins to unfurl—and it is a dark one. With Kamui and the Dragons of Heaven lies the responsibility of whether human kind will go on or be wiped out completely. Opposing him, the Earth Dragons vow to cleanse the planet, and rid it of the parasite called man. Each side is guided by a dream watcher and protected by other Dragons (apostles, if you will) to see that their side's Kamui succeeds. Confused? The name "Kamui" means "God's power," and as fate would have it, these three childhood friends have become the very harbingers of the apocalypse. The other Kamui is Fuma, who soon falls into the hands of the Dragons of Earth, and Kotari's life hangs in the balance between them.

Much of *X* is comprised of some of the most breathtaking battle sequences ever witnessed, as both sides square off within The Dragons of Heavens' protective shields. Each Dragon controls a shield, which protects Tokyo from destruction by placing the quadrant where the battle is taking place in another dimension. As they battle, any damage that the city suffers will not affect the physical world. However, if the creator of that shield dies in battle, the full force of the damage will be felt, and so as they are defeated Tokyo begins to crumble. If all of Tokyo's shields fall, the rest of the world will follow.

The beauty of this story is woven into the visual and audible trance that it creates—a testament to the artistry and storytelling prowess of the all-female Clamp. Containing moments of vivid beauty and the darkest evil, *X* plays out like an opera shifting between dreams and reality. The animation is superb and the score, which contains hints of *Blade Runner* and a piano requiem à la *Eyes Wide Shut*, is tailored to the production masterfully.

It took a good long time for a U.S. company to purchase the U.S. rights to *X*. The anime has one of the highest price tags for a U.S. license, but the market has grown to a point where films like *X* can become lucrative U.S. enterprises. Manga has mixed a formidable dub for the U.S. debut, taking into account that it would be nearly impossible to match the original dialogue. *X* is simply a must-see slice of anime that will linger in your psyche long after the credits roll.



On a desert planet scorched by twin suns, bounty hunters scour the planet looking for Vash the Stampede, a gunslinger so dangerous, a $$60,000,000,000 reward has been placed on his head! Vash, also known as the Human Typhoon, has been credited with the destruction of several towns, but miraculously, there is no record of him ever taking a life, and Vash rarely even draws his weapon. However, only two things ever happen to those who catch up to Vash - they either crawl away wounded (mostly from self-inflicted damage), or they stagger away in disbelief that such a dork could possibly be the man they are looking for!

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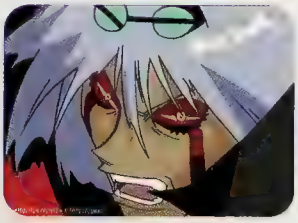
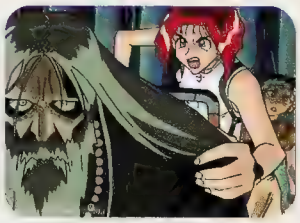
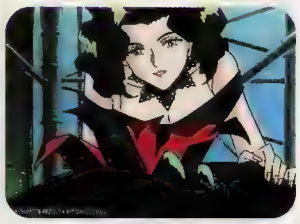

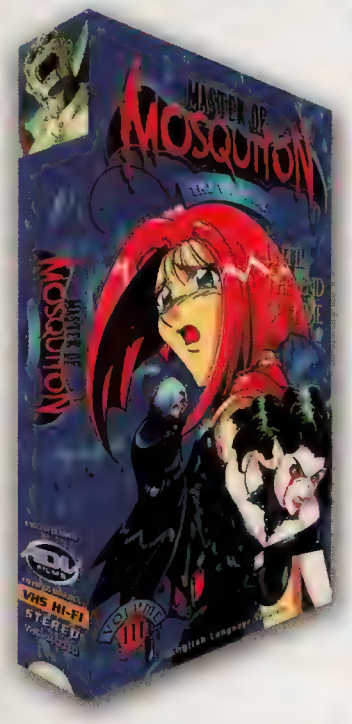

MASTER OF MOSQUITON VOL.3

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•2000 ADV FILMS

60 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH

★★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

Story: In the third installment of *Mosquiton*, Inaho pursues Camille to get her Mosqui back. The small battle between mortal girl and immortal vampire woman basically devolves into a cat fight while Mosqui's ashes are being tossed back and forth like a sack of potatoes. While all this is happening, Count Sangamaine and his master Rasputin's plan to bring down the Starlords is coming very close to becoming a reality.

Character Design: *Mosquiton*'s character designs are very original with the artistic emphasis being placed upon each characters' personality instead of the achievement of inhuman beauty. Mosquiton's own lazy eyes and lanky body add much to his easy-going personality.

Voices: One of the better dubs I have heard. It didn't bother me one bit, and I actually liked Mosquiton's voice.

Animation: This series has average animation, which is somewhat better than TV quality. The best animation happens when Mosquiton is at the height of his full vampiric powers.

Soundtrack: This anime has a solid score with a Jazz/Big Band-type of opening song.

Fight Scenes: The best fight scene of the series so far happens on this tape. Mosquiton and Count Sangamaine have an epic battle in outer space. Yes, I said outer space. My question is, how come Count Sangamaine keeps coming back for more beatings? Once Mosqui takes a nip of Inaho's blood he is well nigh invulnerable, and able to dish out pain in industrial sized doses.

Final Analysis: There are a few questions that go unanswered, and the ending of this portion of *Mosquiton* was as unsatisfying as anything I have seen cross the ocean from Nippon. The relationship between Mosquiton and all of his "owners" (past and present) seems to be more important that the sketchy plot. Strangely, this does not detract from this anime one bit. To put it simply: it was great! Who needs a plot?

GEO BREEDERS

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•2000 CENTRAL PARK MEDIA

60 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH

★★★ ACTION/DRAMA

Story: From what I can glean from this confusing plot, Japan is threatened by a large band of beings called Phantom Cats. The cats seem to be beings made of pure data. They can change to human forms and disrupt anything electric at will. Kagura is a team made up of five girls and one guy who specialize in the extermination of these pesky cats. But Kagura normally manages to blow stuff up instead of capturing and destroying their targets. When Maia, a young Phantom Cat that was befriended by Taba of the Kagura team, is kidnapped, Kagura must brave large groups of the dangerous phantom cats in order to rescue her.

Dubbing: No real problems here. Except for Crimson Shooting Star, who sounded like a New York City reject.

Soundtrack: Standard anime fair, but the ending song, "Dynamite Mambo," is strangely addictive. I admittedly rewound the tape to listen to the song over again, and I will undoubtedly be singing it for the next several weeks.

Fight Scenes: *GeoBreeders* definitely does not disappoint in the fight scene ring. Hardly a minute goes by without something blowing up.

Animation: The animation is surprisingly excellent.

Character Design: Not completely boring, and a little more original than the standard "one guy, five girl harem" design.

Highlight: Cat-food commercial between acts two and three that features a cameo of Maia from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.

Final Analysis: On a scale of one to ten, this anime gets an 11 for originality. The idea of Phantom cats is a great one. But unfortunately it comes across very hurried and frenetic. Too many small details go unexplained that would have made the plot much less confusing. This anime was a great idea that really wasn't executed all that well.

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2. Spriggan **ADV Films**	2. Martian Successor Nadesico **ADV**	2. The Big O **Sunrise**
3. Cowboy Bebop **Bandai**	3. Saber Marionette J **Bandai**	3. Trigun **Yasuhiro Nightow**
4. Trigun **Pioneer**	4. Rurouni Kenshin the Movie **Sony**	4. God Mazinger **Go Nagai**
5. Magic Knight Rayearth **A-Works**	5. Slayers Next **CPM**	5. Sakura Tsuushin **U-Jin**

gamers' Republic anime top 5

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1. Cowboy Beebop **Bandai**
2. Perfect Blue **Manga**
3. Evangelion **ADV Films**
4. Princess Mononoke **Miramax**
5. Macross Plus **Manga**

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In honor of the American release of *Trigun*, we present this brief homage to Tsuneo Imahori's superb compositions, contained on two discs of quite different character. *The First Donuts* is the album to choose if you'd like a conventional soundtrack: the OP, ED, and a blend of BGM. *The Happy Pack*, in contrast, strays into more unfamiliar territory – between music tracks, there are linked dramatic sequences evidently inspired by the "Snakeman Show," a famous Japanese radio comedy. But if you're willing to walk on the weird side, *2nd Donut* is a better album overall, with the best single track of the lot: the thunderous "H.T. – Destroyingangel" mix. It's a four-minute version of the OP guitar riff backed by everything and the kitchen sink, a blizzard of percussion and electronic elements that feels like it could spin out of control at any second. Somehow, it holds together, becoming a tightly focused package with even more power than the original. ***Rev. Dr. David F. Smith***

Trigun-The First Donuts and Trigun-2nd Donut Happy Pack

Victor, Import

First Donuts **B** / Happy Pack **A-**

The Artist is offering up *Rave Un2 the Joy Fantastic*, a giant album of singular Prince funk, rhythms, signature falsetto vocals, love-you-down lyrics, colorful images, high energy, and substantial guests. The Artist is one of the biggest promoters of love—physical, spiritual, global—we have. And Rave is in many ways a millennial love letter from the Purple One to the world. The title track is a soulful funk anthem about unadulterated pleasure. "Undisputed," which features a rhyme by Chuck D., is about artistic freedom (a big issue for The Artist, who had a messy break-up with his former label Warner Bros.). "So Far, So Pleased," is an up pop-rock track with Gwen Stefani supplying co-vocals, while "The Sun, the Moon, and Stars" begins as an R&B confection that segues into a dancehall/light reggae melody, and then back to R&B.

The Artist has created one powerful record that starts out good, and just gets better and better. *Rave Un2 the Joy Fantastic* doesn't own one second-rate song. The album is multi-layered, meaningful, and yes, oh so very joyous. ***Tom Stratton***

Artist-Rave Un2 the Joy...

Arista, Domestic

A

My latest bounty coming away from my now familiar post at the Tower listening station (that is, when I can find a set of headphones that will pump sound into both ears), Guano Apes are the best thing to come out of Germany since the Scorpions. And that's saying a lot. I'm always pumped to find a new rock act with a female lead, although "rock" in this case is quite the understatement. It's impossible to pigeonhole GA into any one category. The debut album changes like a chameleon going from metal overtures, to audacious ballads, to punkish raves - my only sore spot in the initial offering. Too often female leads come across either too hard or to syrupy - and repulsive vocals can ruin your whole day, no matter how sweet the sounds. GA's Sandra Nasic (who also wrote all of the lyrics) hits it perfect with a distinct sound all her own. Not since Shirley Manson have I heard such a distinct and audibly delectable set of pipes. Not to take away from the rest of the band, whose brand of metal/rock—with thumping bass, walls of guitar, and driving drums—produces a heavenly sound. The first three songs on the album alone are worth the price of the admission. The first track, "Open your Eyes," is possibly the best single I've heard this year and "Maria," the second, has been lodged in my head since the first listen.

These four click in a big way and the result is a new band that I'm sure we're going to be hearing a lot from in the future. Their new album is already in the works for a 2000 release and they're touring over here this year. Check them out on the web at guanoapes.com for details. ***Dave Halverson***

Guano Apes-Proud Like a God

RCA/BMG, Domestic

B+

Gamers' Re[public] Music Reviews

Audiophiles

What GR is listening to this month

D Halverson	B Fiechter	M Hobbs	T Stratton	Pooch
1. **GUANO APES** *proud like a god*	1. **GREEN MILE** *soundtrack*	1. **PHILIP GLASS/UAKTI** *aguas de amazonia*	1. **N.W.A.** *straight outta compton*	1. **BEASTIE BOYS** *anthology*
2. **KORN** *issues*	2. **AMIE MANN** *magnolia soundtrack*	2. **SASHA** *live in ibiza*	2. **BABELOO!** *hardcore juju*	2. **2PAC/OUTLAWS** *still I rise*
3. **311** *sound system*	3. **STONE TEMPLE PILOTS** *album #4*	3. **HITOSHI SAKIMOTO** *radiant silvergun*	3. **DEL** *both sides of the brain*	3. **RICK JAMES** *greatest hits*
4. **ROBBIE WILLIAMS** *the ego has landed*	4. **TOAD THE WET SPROCKET** *dulcinea*	4. **PET SHOP BOYS** *disco 2*	4. **VINCENT GALLO** *buffalo 66 soundtrack*	4. **STEVIE NICKS** *timespace*
5. **MOTLEY CRÜE** *greatest hits*	5. **FIONA APPLE** *when the pawn...*	5. **UNDERWORLD** *beaucoup fish*	5. **LeANN RIMES** *leann rimes*	5. **METALLICA** *ride the lightning*

D Smith	J.R. Haugen	E Fear	G Elmquist	G Abraham
1. **IMAHORI T.** *trigun 2nd donuts happy pack*	1. **LMP** *a century of song (www.polyholiday.com)*	1. **SMASH MOUTH** *astro lounge*	1. **EVERCLEAR** *so much for the afterglow*	1. **ERASURE** *cowboy*
2. **BILL HICKS** *relentless*	2. **BELLE AND SEBASTIAN** *tigermilk*	2. **LIMP BIZKIT** *significant other*	2. **FACE TO FACE** *live face to face*	2. **TEKKEN TAG TOURN.** *soundtrack*
3. **BLACK SABBATH** *paranoid*	3. **THE CARDIGANS** *first band on the moon*	3. **MONKEY MAGIC** *soundtrack*	3. **BLINK 182** *chesire cat*	3. **STREET FIGHTER 3** *third strike*
4. **BRAVE COMBO** *polka party live and wild*	4. **MELANIE C** *northern star*	4. **STEVE MORSE** *coast to coast*	4. **SYSTEM OF A DOWN** *system of a down*	4. **RAGGA DANCEHALL ANTHEMS '99**
5 **THE VANDALS** *live fast diarrhea*	5. **KIDS OF WIDNEY HIGH** *special music from special kids*	5. **NON-AGGRESSION PACT** *broadcast quality belligerence*	5. **TESLA** *psychotic supper*	5. **BJØRK** *homogenic*

dear Easter Bunny

please can i have

candy
comic books
under ware
a new monky
and
video game music
from MarsColonyMusic.com

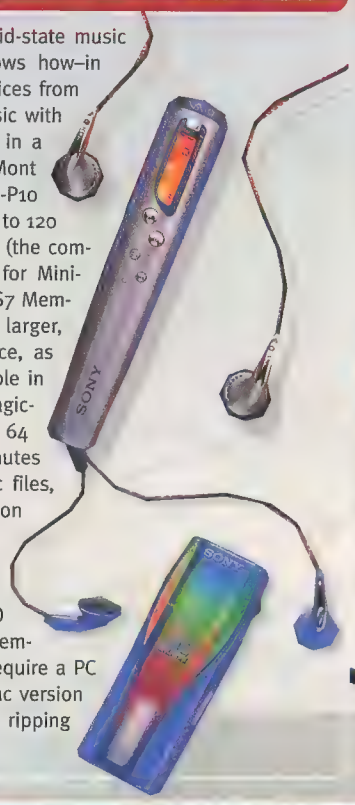
luv
Jason

MARS™ COLONY MUSIC

• MS Walkman/Music Clip

Sony • www.sony.com • Retail: $299/$399

Sony has entered the solid-state music arena the only way it knows how–in extreme style. Two new devices from Sony allow you to take music with you literally anywhere, one in a carrier just larger than a Mont Blanc fountain pen. The MC-P10 VAIO Music Clip can hold up to 120 minutes of MP3 or ATRAC 3 (the compression algorithm created for MiniDisc) music files. The NW-MS7 Memory Stick Walkman is the larger, slightly more versatile device, as its memory is interchangeable in the form of the so-called Magic-Gate Memory Sticks. These 64 MB wafers can hold 120 minutes of MP3 and ATRAC 3 music files, and can be switched easily on the go. They cost a rather steep $160 a pop, but have the benefit of being infinitely reusable. Both the VAIO Music Clip ($299) and the Memory Stick Walkman ($399) require a PC with a USB interface (no Mac version yet), and both include CD ripping software.



• Casio Wrist Camera

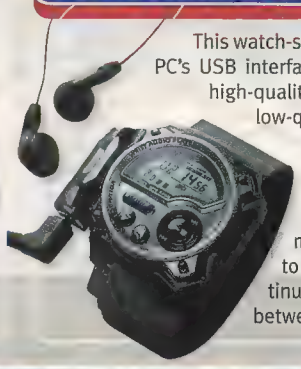
Casio • www.casio.com • Retail: est. $200–300

Casio's Wrist Cam, the WQV-1, is a marvelously useless gadget that we can't wait to get our hands on. Recording up to a hundred black and white, 16-level grayscale images on its internal 1MB of memory, the Casio Wrist Cam is perfect for capturing those fleeting glimpses of, well, who knows what. You can use its little 120x120 screen as a viewfinder or a picture viewer, and can even beam images via infra-red to another wrist cam or to your desktop PC.

• Casio MP3 Watch

Casio • www.casio.com • Retail: est. $200–300

This watch-sized MP3 player, the WMP-1V, utilizes a PC's USB interface to download up to 33 minutes of high-quality-mode MP3 audio or 66 minutes of low-quality-mode into the little device. The LCD display scrolls song and artist info, and the Animated Motion Graphics will move and bounce to the beat of your music choice. Expect a four minute song to take about 70 seconds to transfer from PC to watch, and a continuous operating time of about four hours between charges.



GR GEAR

• Rally 2 Racing Wheel for Dreamcast

Pelican Accessories • www.pelicanacc.com • Retail: $29.99

Coolness Factor:

The Rally 2 Racing Wheel sports a nice, compact design, with fun little LEDs showing accelerator paddle travel and a built-in rumble feature. The controller also features surprisingly effective suction-cup feet, which keep it firmly anchored to even slightly coarse surfaces. But the Rally 2 is curious in that it's not recognized as a wheel by games like Sega Rally, but rather as a normal DC pad. Hence, it requires some sensitivity training before it feels natural. Once comfort has been reached, however, this becomes a decent, low-cost alternative to the official Sega Rally wheel. Working against it is build quality that is less than inspiring: At the wheel's extremes of travel, a cheap-sounding spring rebound can be heard and the rumble motor emits a nasty din.

• Alloy Arcade Stick for Dreamcast

InterAct • www.interact-acc.com • Retail: $59.99

Coolness Factor:

This is a big gaudy thing, isn't it? You'd never see something this ostentatious ever come out of Japan, and whether you take this as praise or criticism depends wholly upon your particular taste. And big hunk of chromed metal that it is, I expected Interact's Alloy Arcade Stick to be a mediocre performer, all flash and no go, as they say. In actual play, however, it proved to be quite adept. We gave it a good thrashing during bouts of Capcom's Street Fighter III and Kikaioh (Tech Romancer), and its heavy, solid feel made the device satisfying to use. The joystick itself, though it has a lot of travel, is actually very responsive, and the buttons are well sized and placed. Now if only there was some way to keep fingerprints off of the damn thing.

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LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER

In the following codes, all directions are input with the D-pad.

RAZIEL ALL ABILITIES
The following code will give you all of Raziel's abilities. Pause the game and hold the L and R buttons simultaneously and press Up (x2), Down, Right (x2), Left, B, Right, Left, Down. Raziel will now be able to swim, phase, constrict, wall climb and crawl and fire force projectiles.

WARP GATES
To open all of the warp gates, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Up (x2), Down, Right (x2), Left, B, Right, Left, Down.

MAXIMUM HEALTH UPGRADE
To give Raziel maximum health, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Right, B, Down, Up, Down, Up.

KAIN REAVER
To access the Kain Reaver, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, A, B, Right, Y, Left (x2), Right, Up.

SOUL REAVER
To access the Soul Reaver, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Down, Y, X, Right (x2), Down (x2), Left, Y, Down, Right.

STONE GLYPH
To access the Stone Glyph, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Down, B, Up, Left, Down, Right (x2).

SUNLIGHT GLYPH
To access the Sunlight Glyph, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Left, B, Left, Right (x2), Up (x2), Left.

WATER GLYPH
To access the Water Glyph, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Down, B, Up, Down, Right.

MAXIMUM MAGIC
To give Raziel the maximum magic power, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Y, Right, Down, Right, Up, Y, Left.

RESTORE MAGIC
To refill Raziel's magic, pause the game and input the following code: Hold L and R triggers, Right (x2), Left, Y, Right, Down.

NBA JAM 2K

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, TOM STRATTON
To unlock three hidden teams - NBA 2K, Sega Sports and Sega - enter the following code: DEVDUDES. The teams will now be selectable in the Team Select screen. To play with Tom Stratton on the team, choose the Sega team. Start a game and pause it after the tip. Go to the substitutions option. Select one of the On Court people (switching with Byrd, R. is best because he's the same position). Go to the On Bench players and select Stratton, T. Press Start. Tom will come in at the next dead ball.

BIGGIE SMALLS
To play with fat players, enter the following code: DOUGHBOY

MORE BIGGIE SMALLS
To play with different types of big players, enter the following code: MONSTER

JUST SMALLS
To play with fast, humorous, miniature players, enter the following code: LITTLEGUY

WHAT A NOGGIN
To play big head mode, enter the following code: FATHEAD

MY WHAT BIG FEET
To play with huge feet, enter the following code: BIGFOOT

BIG BALLS
To play with a huge basketball, enter the following code: BEACHBOYS

HIDDEN COURTS
To play in an outdoor court, activate the DEVDUDES code and then, when picking teams, pick one of the three hidden teams as the Home team.

NBA SHOWTIME

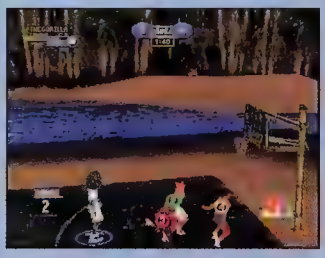
TEAM MASCOTS
The following codes will allow you to play as and save the progress of one of the NBA team mascots and play with them on any team. Select the Enter Initials option and then Yes to enter a name for record keeping. Enter the name and the PIN numbers below. You will hear a sound confirming that you have successfully entered the code.

Atlanta Hawks Hawk = Hawk + 0322
New Jersey Nets Coyote = Sly + 6765
Phoenix Suns Gorilla = Gorila +0314
Toronto Raptors Raptor = Raptor + 1020
Utah Jazz Bear = Bear + 1228

HIDDEN CHARACTERS
Using the same method as above, the following will allow you to play as hidden characters.

Kerri Hoskins = Kerri + 0220
A white horse = Horse + 1966
A large alien = Biggy + 0958
Pumpkinhead = Jacko + 1031
Grandpa = Oldman + 2001
Nikko the Devil Dog = Nikko + 6666
The Wizard = Thewiz + 1136
Retro Rob = Retro + 1970
Lia Montelongo = Lia + 0712

HIDDEN COURTS
To access the hidden Street court, immediately after selecting the second teammate, Hold Left and press Turbo. You will hear a noise confirming the code. To access a Jungle court, Hold Right and press Turbo.



GAME ATTRIBUTES
The game attribute codes are entered in the Vs. screen, using the Turbo button for the first number, the Shoot button for the second number, the Pass button for the third number and the crosspad for the direction. The codes need to be entered before the screen disappears. More than one code can be used.

Big Head Mode = 2 - 0 - 0 - Right
Unlimited Turbo = 4 - 1 - 1 - Up
Show Hot Spots = 1 - 0 - 0 - Down
Tournament Mode = 1 - 1 - 1 Down
No Fouls in Versus Mode = 2 - 2 - 2 - Right
No Goaltending = 5 - 5 - 5 - Left
ABA Ball = 2 - 3 - 2 - Right

READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING

UNLOCK DAMIEN BLACK/CHAMP FIGHTERS
To unlock the Championship Class of fighters and Damien Black for use in the Arcade Mode, go to Championship mode and enter the word CHAMP as your gym name. Go back to the main menu and enter the Arcade Mode. Damien Black will now be a selectable character. This will also change the number of selectable characters in Championship mode from three to 17 and they will all fight as Championship Class fighters.

UNLOCK NAT DADDY/GOLD FIGHTERS
To unlock the Gold Class of fighters and Nat Daddy for use in the Arcade Mode, go to Championship mode and enter the word GOLD as your gym name. Go back to the main menu and enter the Arcade Mode. Nat Daddy will now be a selectable character. This will also change the number of selectable characters in Championship mode from three to 17 and they will fight as Gold Class fighters.

YA LOOK PRETTY, BOY
The following code will allow you to choose a secondary look for each fighter, as well as new opening and closing cinemas. At the character selection screen, choose a boxer and press C-Up + C-Left.

THE HITS KEEP COMING
Fight well enough to spell the word RUMBLE at the bottom of the screen and then press A+B to activate the power mode. Your fighter's gloves will glow. When you get close to your opponent, press C-Down + C-Right to perform a flurry of punches.

TAKE THAT
To spew some verbal abuse, simply hold C-Down + C-Left or C-Right + C-Up.

IT PAYS TO TRAIN
There is a great cheat to get the $25,000 bottle of Rumble Mass Nutrition Regime for only $500. Go into Championship mode and pick a fighter. Then choose Train Boxer. You will initially have $1,000 to train with and most things will be too expensive. Scroll to the left from the Rumble Aerobics Training screen and as soon as the screen moves, press the A button.

ROAD RASH 64

With all the codes below, the R and the L are in reference to the Left and Right buttons on top of the controller. All of these codes should be entered at the main menu.

LEVELS, LEVELS, LEVELS
Access All Levels: Z, C-Right, C-Down, C-Left, C-Right (x2), Z, L.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS
To choose from the many riders seen throughout the game, simply press up and down on the control stick when selecting the motorbike.

SUPERBIKES AND INSANITY
To open up the superbikes and the Insanity Level tracks in Thrash mode, including the humorous Race 8: C-Up, C-Left (x2), C-Right, L, R, C-Down, Z. You will hear a little "bleep" if performed correctly.

SCOOTERS
To open up the Scooters level in Thrash mode: C-Down, C-Right, C-Up, C-Left, Z (x2), L, C-Left. You will hear a little "bleep" if performed correctly. This will put everyone on little scooters.

BE THE MAN
To access the Cop races in the Thrash mode, including a female officer in her summer shorts: Z, C-Left, C-Down, C-Left, Z, L, R, C-Down. You will hear a little "bleep" if performed correctly.

TAKE OUT THE MAN
It's a tricky maneuver, but there are two ways to do it - the harmless way and the not-so-harmless way. In the harmless way, you will need to get right behind the motorcycle cop when they are stopped on the side of the road, then press the A button to perform a wheelie and launch off of them. This will take them out and keep you from crashing. The not-so-safe way is to simply crash into them. Although you will lose time and position, you will take out the officer.

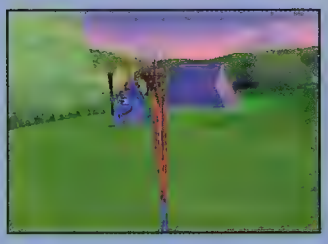
SPYRO 2: RIPTO'S RAGE

CRASH SPYRO'S PARTY
The following code is activated at the title screen. To play a hidden demo of Crash Team Racing, including multiplayer races, enter the following code: Hold down L1 + R2 and press Square.

SPYRO'S HUGE EGO
The following code is inputted by pausing the game. To give Spyro a BIG HEAD, enter: Up (x4), R1 (x4) and Circle. You will hear a noise confirming that the code has been activated.

SPYRO 2: RIPTO'S RAGE [continued]

BE LIKE PARAPPA
The following code is activated by pausing the game and then inputting the code. To make Spyro appear like the wafer-thin Parappa, enter the following code: Left, Right, Left, Right, L2, R2, L2, R2, Square. You will hear a noise confirming that the code has been activated.

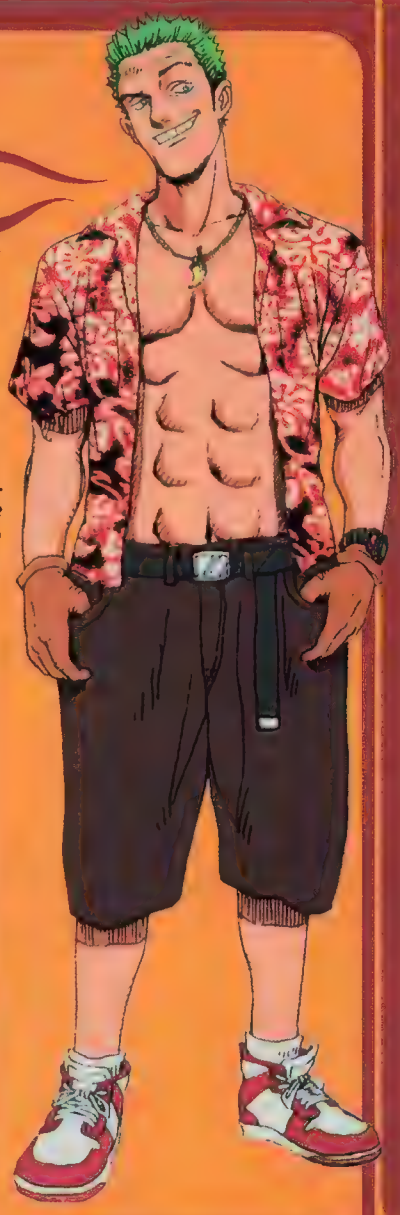


ADDITIONAL ENDINGS
After you have defeated Ripto (and if you have managed to earn at least one Skill Point already), two more pages are added to your Guidebook. These pages will show each Skill Point you have already earned and in which level they were found. Skill Points are earned for completing 16 tasks scattered throughout the game. Once you have earned 10 Skill Points, you will gain access to a secret Epilogue in the Guidebook; with 16 Skill Points, another section of the Epilogue will open.

The 16 Skill Points are:
1. Idol Springs - glide to the top of the big stone idol in the valley and beat the hula girl challenge
2. Colossus - beat the opposing hockey player 5-0
3. Hurricos - destroy all wooden windmills
4. Aquaria - destroy all kelp strands with the underwater superflame
5. Ocean Speedway - complete the course in under 1:10
6. Crush's Dungeon - defeat Crush without getting hit
7. Skelos Badlands - destroy all the cacti
8. Skelos Badlands - eliminate the quartet of batacats who are hovering near the rocket close to the level exit
9. Metro Speedway - complete the course in under 1:15
10. Scorch - charge all of the palm trees that don't contain monkeys
11. Fracture Hills - complete the supercharge circuit three times without stopping (this means that you have to figure out the path that will allow you to pass through the supercharge powerup without exiting the supercharge mode)
12. Icy Speedway - complete the course in under 1:15
13. Gulp's Overlook - defeat Gulp without getting hit
14. Gulp's Overlook - hit Ripto with a rocket
15. Canyon Speedway - complete the course in under 1:10
16. Ripto's Arena - defeat Ripto without getting hit

CAB DRIVER'S ED

AN INTRODUCTORY GUIDE TO CRAZY TAXI



MAKING MONEY ON SEGA S CITY STREETS

When you first hop in AM3's Crazy Taxi, the immediate temptation is to drive completely out of control. We admit that multi-car pileups are pretty entertaining, but if you want to rack up the big fares, you're going to have to learn your way around town and develop some real skills behind the wheel. Here's an introduction to the special maneuvers you'll need to learn, as well as some tips concerning how the city fits together. The rest is up to you, though: get out there and lay down some rubber!

CRAZY TECHNIQUES

CRAZY DASH

For a quick start, or extra speed in areas where you still need to maneuver, the basic Crazy Dash is the way to go. Hit your accelerator trigger while pressing the Drive button—your engine will rev up and you'll get a burst of speed. You can Crazy Dash at any time, so don't be afraid to keep hammering on the gas pedal. You'll need that extra acceleration to shave seconds off your time, and unlike the Limiter Cut, the Dash won't impair your steering.

CRAZY DRIFT

This is a bit trickier than the Dash, but it's vital for racking up tip bonuses. To Crazy Drift, roll your thumb from the Reverse button to the Drive button while pulling the accelerator and turning in the direction you want to go. You'll throw the car's rear end out and turn sharply; if you're lucky, you'll snag some tips as well. To come out of your Drift, let off the gas for a moment. The Drift is great for coming to a quick stop, and you can apply it creatively for big bonuses.

LIMITER CUT

The Limiter Cut will give you an even bigger speed boost than the Dash, at the cost of some maneuverability. When you're either moving or stationary, drop into Reverse and Crazy Dash. You'll know when you've done it: your car will hop like it's got a hydraulic suspension and you'll take off at an insane speed. This is the best time to Drift, because it'll throw you around the corners at the highest possible speed, but normal steering is vastly impaired, like driving on ice.

CRAZY BRAKES

The Crazy Drift can be used to slide to a stop, but if you don't have anything handy to crash into, the Crazy Brakes will slow you down quickly. The trick is to Crazy Dash, and then quickly perform the opposite move: press Drive and accelerate, then hit Reverse and brake. As your brake lights come on, the car will jump like you've performed a Limiter Cut and you'll come to a very sudden stop—handy for when you've arrived at your destination.

OTHER CRAZY STUFF

QUICK TURN - When you've picked up a fare going the opposite way, here's a trick to turn around quickly. Turn in the desired direction, hit the accelerator, and just as your car starts turning, let off the accelerator and then Crazy Dash while still holding the D-pad to turn.

CRAZY REVERSE DASH - Given the game's lack of a rear-view mirror, you're liable to smash through plenty of oncoming traffic, but if you really want to, you can Crazy Dash in reverse. Start in reverse gear, shift into drive, and then hit reverse and accelerate simultaneously.

TIP COMBO THEORY

When you pull off a Crazy Through (a close pass), a Crazy Jump (self-explanatory), or a Crazy Drift (to your left there) you'll get tip bonuses. At first, you'll earn pocket change, but if you can chain together a continuous string of bonuses, the tips will get bigger and bigger - imagine twenty dollars and more per bonus. Bumping other cars will break your chain, though, so you'll need skill as well as audacity.

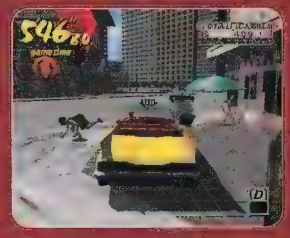
GENERAL ADVICE

GAME OBJECTIVES

There are two modes in Crazy Taxi: Arcade rules and Time Limit rules. Time Limit rules are simple: you have a certain amount of time to make as much cash as possible. Arcade rules give you a flexible pool of time; deliver your fares quickly, and you get bonuses to extend your timer. In Time Limit, it's best to go for big tip bonuses, but in Arcade, speed is of the essence, so save your time for the next fare.

PICKING UP CUSTOMERS

The key thing to remember in Crazy Taxi, especially under Arcade rules, is that seconds count. When you're picking up customers, park close, but not too close. Don't make them run too far to hop in your cab, but don't make them dive out of the way, either. While you're waiting for them to catch up, the timer is still running. Also, keep an eye on the priority marker above their heads. Green fares are the way to go; they have the most forgiving time limit, which means more time bonuses once you've dropped them off.

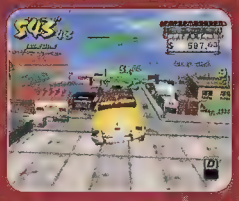


DROPPING OFF CUSTOMERS

When you've reached your destination, come to a quick stop, but keep your next fare in mind. Land in a situation where you can take off quickly, and when you're on the home stretch, keep an eye out for potential fares. The best choice for most landings is a Crazy Drift, especially when there's something to drift into (those franchise logos are always handy that way). It lets you rack up some more tips and point yourself in the right direction for take-off. If you don't want to turn around, use your Crazy Brakes.

TIP COMBOS

Tip combos are the difference between an average run and cashing in big-time. Learn which areas let you chain big combos together. The expressways and straight hillside boulevards are good for lots of Throughs, while the waterfront drawbridges let you score big Crazy Jump bonuses and add a few Throughs and Drifts afterwards. There's also a handy trick for earning bonuses with the Crazy Drift. Drift into a wall at high speed, and hold your accelerator down. You'll slide into the wall at high speed, and if you had enough momentum to begin with, you'll just sit there grinding against the wall while huge bonuses rack up. This is a great way to come to a stop in Time Limit mode, but in Arcade mode, save your seconds for the next fare.



AVOIDING COLLISIONS

You'll get most of your bonuses with Crazy Throughs, so learn to carefully weave between traffic and miss oncoming cars by inches. Aim for the center line in those blind hillside intersections, where it's easy to hit slower traffic. The Crazy Drift may be great fun to pull off, but remember that you'll lose a lot of control if you're not careful with it: tight, crowded intersections call for more conservative turning.

CITY OVERVIEW

DOWNTOWN

Downtown may be the most difficult area in the game. The streets are narrow and crowded, the routes are twisty, and the guide arrow is almost always a bit misleading. A key feature of Downtown is the rooftop restaurant, which you can jump with the handy ramps over the subway entrances. Use this shortcut to shave time off all routes except one: the Cafeteria. If you're on your way there, the rooftop jump will make you overshoot your destination.

WATERFRONT

The Waterfront features AM3's classic homage to *The Blues Brothers*—the two drawbridge jumps, which give you massive air (and bonuses) if you take off with a Limiter Cut. There are some difficult destinations as well, though. When you're heading for the Lighthouse or the Landing Pier, don't fall off the edge. Driving underwater is funny, yes, but you can't pick anyone up down there (almost), and you'll lose plenty of time on your way to the surface.

HILLSIDE SHOPS

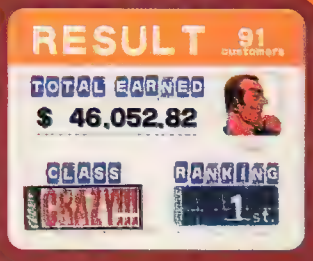
A key fact here is that all the name-brand stores (Fila, Levi's, and so forth) are on a single street that runs the length of the hillside; it's the first left at the Big Hills Park. Keep that in mind when they're your destination, since the arrow doesn't always point you true. Also, be careful when you're on your way to the Marine Museum. When you're heading uphill, the turn to take is just to the left of the main drag, and it's very easy to miss when you're getting started.

SUBURBS

On the outskirts of town, the most important features are the train tunnels, which make handy shortcuts when you're on your way to the Stations. The subways are more difficult; it's harder to maneuver in them. Speaking of the Stations, number one on the tricky destination list is the East Village Station, nestled in a cul-de-sac off a five-way intersection. When the arrow's pointing every which way, look for a small turn surrounded by green. That's the way to go.

DEVELOPING CAB ROUTES

Time Limit rules are good for practicing and having fun, but as you can see to your right there, arcade mode is where you earn the big money. Once you've polished your driving skills, the next step is learning the many routes around the city. The original city is more complex than the arcade's, in which you could travel in a perpetual loop. The routines governing fare placement are neither random nor static. Depending on when you arrive at a certain place, fares may or may not be available, and they may want to go to one of a number of different destinations. Learning the tendencies of certain fares in certain areas can help you plan your strategy. Here are some tips for routes early in the game.



LEVI S STORE

The very first fare you'll probably pick up, at the top of the hill, is a young lady on the way to the Original Levi's Store; she's the closest fare to your starting point, so save a few seconds instead of going for the green fares behind her. It's a straightforward route, but if you've got a good handle on your cab you can practice your special maneuvers and make some nice tips and time bonuses on the way. Go for Crazy Through bonuses heading down the hill, and Crazy Drift through the left turn that comes up fairly quickly. Under Time Limit rules, don't forget to drift into the building at your destination for even more bonuses.

CAMPSITE SUBWAY

This is where the game's navigation system gets a bit interesting. The nearest fare to the Levi's Store is just down the hill on the right side - pick him up, and he may want to go to the Campsite Subway. If so, ignore the guide arrow and take a left turn up the hill. The arrow, as a rule, is not your friend. It often points to your destination as the crow flies, rather than as the cab drives, especially in complex areas like the hillside and downtown. In this instance, it won't point you true until you've gotten up the hill, past the red cantilever bridge. Once you're near the top, though, it'll be back on track, and when it points you to the right, follow it down the hill, bearing to the left over the train tracks and through the field, and head for the subway entrance.

MARINE PLAZA

Not every fare always wants to go to the same place. That same fellow who sometimes wants to go to the subway will equally often be headed for the Marine Plaza. This is a great route, giving you a chance to earn plenty of Drift and Jump bonuses. Peel off down the hill, drift to the left at the bottom, hang a right at the drawbridge, and immediately hit the Limiter Cut. If you jump the bridge with enough speed, you'll clear an entire block of warehouses and land pointing straight at your destination.

KINGS PARK AND BEYOND

Sometimes it's faster to stay on the road. More often, it's not. After you've dropped off your Marine Plaza fare, you'll be right next to a fellow headed for Kings Park. Hit the gas and head straight for the concrete embankment in front of you. You'll leap over the water and land at the gates to downtown. Just after this, you'll come upon another shortcut—the subway jump over the rooftop restaurant. The roofs over the subway entrances happen to make perfect ramps. Crazy Dash or Limiter Cut when you hit them, and aim for the staircase separating the roof's two levels - miss the staircase and you'll be stopped cold, but if you aim true, you'll jump straight off the other side and find yourself a stone's throw from the park, having skipped a huge section of twisty streets.

That's the trick to Crazy Taxi: learning to drive is part of it, but mastering the ins and outs of the city is even more important. Now hit the road and see what you can do.

RETURN OF THE FIVE DEADLY VENOMS — B+

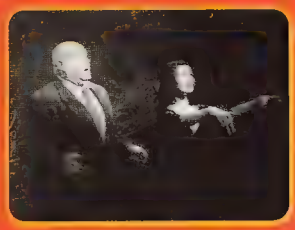
CRASH CINEMA (www.centralparkmedia.com)
IMPORT • VHS
UNRATED (some minor violence & blood, suitable for teens & up)
REVIEWED BY EDD FEAR

This 1979 sequel stands on its own as a great example of good filmmaking from the Far East. It tells the story of four strangers who dare to cross a town's boss and his son. One loses his eyes, another his speech and hearing, a third his legs, and the last has his head compressed, which turns him into an idiot. The first three band together, and discover a note from the fourth's kung-fu teacher outside of town, so they depart to reunite them. The teacher decides to train all four in martial arts and help them overcome their new disabilities. After three years, boy, do they overcome them! They return to town just in time for the boss man's 43rd birthday, and they proceed to give him a present he'll never forget!

Between the great martial arts action, the compelling story, and the great characters, this is a film that you'd do well to track down. As an added bonus, Crash Cinema has seen fit to present this in widescreen format, and although it's overdubbed, the voice acting is better than most in this genre. The only problem—and it's probably just something that's lost in the translation—is that there are only four main characters, and we never could find the fifth deadly venom.

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE: *Special Edition* — B

IMAGE ENTERTAINMENT (www.image-entertainment.com)
DOMESTIC (1956) • DVD
UNRATED
DVD FEATURES: "FLYING SAUCERS OVER HOLLYWOOD: THE PLAN 9 COMPANION" DOCUMENTARY FEATURING INTERVIEWS WITH STARS, PLUS SCI-FI HISTORIAN FORREST J. ACKERMAN AND SAM RAIMI AND JOE DANTE
REVIEWED BY EDD FEAR



Ed Wood's sci-fi B-movie "masterpiece" has been a cult classic for years, and has become a world-wide phenomenon. I first saw this film at art school in Norway, and my buddy Helge had waited several months for his VHS copy to arrive. Now one of the best "worst" movies has come to DVD, with a documentary that delves into its making, interviews with many of the stars, as well as sci-fi historian Forrest J. Ackerman and B-movie directors Sam Raimi and Joe Dante.

If you've never experienced this must-see bit of Americana, this is the way to do it—and remember, this is *not* a comedy!

DINOSAUR — PREVIEW

DISNEY (www.disney.com)
DOMESTIC • THEATRICAL RELEASE MAY 2000
RATED G
PREVIEWED BY MIKE HOBBS

Disney's rumored $200-300 million prehistoric epic, *Dinosaur*, is due to hit theatres this May, and this ambitious mix of CG and live action has already amazed audiences in a stunning five minute trailer. In this preview, there is no dialogue, just a stunning trip that follows the journey of a little Parasaurolophus egg as it narrowly escapes destruction, first from a stampede, and finally from the mouth of a Pterodactyl.

But the more I learn about *Dinosaur*, the less excited I am by it. Perhaps as a result of its astronomical budget, it seems as if Disney is crafting an achingly conventional story for this visual wonder. In it, the aforementioned egg is discovered by a group of Lemurs, who then raise the three ton beast, and give it the name Aladar. Oh yeah, did I mention that the dinosaurs talk? That's right. It turns out that Disney is making nothing more than an ultra-budget cartoon, and this is a depressing example of business ruining a wonderfully tripped-out idea. Reportedly, *Dinosaur*'s original concept was that it was to be a 90 minute nature film, a story told solely through images about the life of a small group of dinosaurs. Imagine that. But as costs escalated, a traditional narrative (complete with villain) was deemed necessary to guarantee a return.

Dinosaur will no doubt be a visually amazing film, and maybe its story will prove emotionally satisfying, but I mourn the lack of risk-taking on Disney's part. Don't they have enough money to allow themselves the luxury of making a $200 million art film? I reckon not.

THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

AGENT SCULLY, JEDI: There's a rumor circulating that GR's favorite FBI agent, Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson in real life, we're told) may be appearing in the upcoming *Star Wars* film as a member of the Jedi council and a former student of Qui-Gon. As Fox would say, "I want to believe." • THE ANGEL'S LITTLE JOEY: Last month we mentioned that Lucy Liu had signed onto the *Charlie's Angels* film, and now we have word that Matt LeBlanc (*Friend*'s Joey Tribbiani) will play her love interest, as a star of action films who has no knowledge of his little angel's secret life. • DOIN' WHATEVER A SPIDER CAN: Assuming the *Spider-Man* film ever gets going, the current likely prospects for the part of Peter Parker are Leonardo DiCaprio, Freddie Prinze Jr., and Jude Law. But will any one of these guys be bitten by a radioactive spider, or just radioactive fan-girls?

readers 011001

FALLOUT

Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to: **Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 215, Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).**

Dear GR,

In a recent letter to you—in fact, the one you printed in the new issue—I talked about the many ported games that were coming out for the Dreamcast, especially from the PC. It seems that many were concerned about that aspect of the Dreamcast. In today's news (Feb. 10), Sega had to publicly comment on this. You should check it out...

Another thing I need to ask you, what made you guys waste paper on Snoop Dog Pooh. So much to cover and enlighten, yet you choose to lay ink down on a thug. Bad taste.

Take care,
Al Liu

Al,

Indeed Sega is now aware of the porting issue and hopefully we'll begin to see more games that show what the Dreamcast can really do as a result. It's great to see that they're listening to what gamers have to say. Regarding Snoop–You didn't think that our interview was dope? Wuzup? He had us in stitches! No, seriously, Snoop has a lot of fans and we felt they'd appreciate his comments on how gaming affects his life. It was money, bay-bay.

Dear GR,

First off I'd like to say how much I enjoy reading your magazine–it's one of the best out there. Second... Help! I was reading issue number 18 and noticed in your anime section you were reviewing a tape called *Variable Geo* and I want to know if you can help me find it. I've looked everywhere! AnimeWorks, Anime Nation, Banzai Anime, even those weird little sites owned by people named "Berta." I spent eight hours looking for it only to find one site with pictures, but he couldn't help me because he lost his copy! Don't get me wrong, I'm not some screwy old guy who's lost his mind, I'm just a 15-year-old kid who really digs anime. I hope you can help me.

Robert

Robert,

Funny you should ask about Variable Geo, *the only anime to feature big-chested dueling waitresses! I've caught an insurmountable amount of flack for liking it from our resident anime guru. Anyhow, it's an ADV Films title, so a visit to advfilms.com should solve your problem. I believe you'll also find it at most Suncoast locations (in greater malls throughout the U.S.). Bear in mind, though,* Variable Geo *does contain large naked breasts so you may have to bribe an adult if you can't see over the counter. By the way, not to seem jerky or anything, but we always list the publisher right below the title. D'oh! Hey, you're hunting for anime at 15, so you're already way ahead of the curve in my book.*

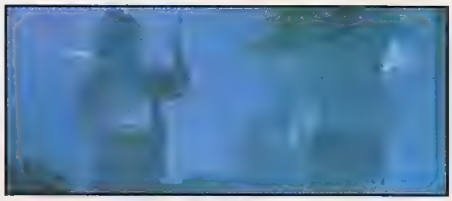
Dear GR,

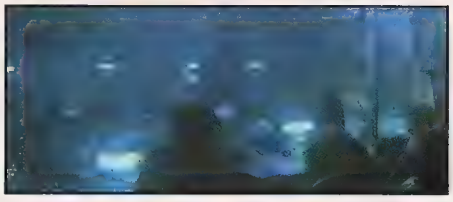
I hope I'm properly addressing this so here it goes. First off let me say how much I enjoy and respect your guys' work and efforts. I have been a fan since GF. I've come to expect honest, hard-hitting, entertaining journalism and you have never fallen short. In a sell-out industry you have maintained a high level of integrity and intensity and I thank you.

I do have a question. I could not find the answer anywhere else so I turn to you. In the movie *Blade* there is a school-uniform-clad girl act in a night club. Who are they and where can I get a copy of that song or their album? Finally, I'm sure you get many requests like this but what does it take to work for Gamer's Republic? What can I send you and are you hiring?

I thank you for your time and hope to hear from you soon.
Sincerely,
Michael N. Schenck

Michael,





To prove we didn't print your letter just for the plug (but thanks), we've included a photo of said chick rockers. After some on-line investigating we finally uncovered their identity. The name of the band is Bang Wa Cherry and the song is "Chin Chin" (and no it's not about Jay Leno). It's a shame they never wore uniforms like that in my Catholic school. As for careers in the fabulous world of video game journalism (no pun intended, it's the coolest way we know of to make ends meet), we are always looking for talented people who can brave playing games for a living. You'd be surprised how hard they are to find. The best thing to do is email writing samples to either Brady or Dave and wait for a reply.

Hey GR,

I was just wondering, what were your thoughts on Konami's N64 RPG Hybrid Heaven? I haven't seen the review in the mag, but assuming you've played it, what letter grade has it earned in your eyes? One thing's for sure, KCEO can do some remarkable things with the N64 aurally. Goemon's Great Adventure is further proof of that. Thanks a lot!

Sincerely,
Kenny

Kenny,

We did review Hybrid Heaven quite some time ago, and while we liked the overall look and feel of the game very much, we felt that the fighting structure left much to be desired. However, those who like the fighting aspects of the game seem to have really loved Hybrid Heaven. Perhaps a sequel is in your future. Goemon's Great Adventure, on the other hand, is a great game that seems to have slipped by unnoticed – which is a real shame. We highly recommend this one to anyone within reach of a Nintendo 64 – a thoroughly underrated game. You've covered some old ground, my friend, but it's ground worth surveying indeed. It's not like there's an over abundance of hot new 64 games headed our way. As the 64's days wind down, the time to go back and explore games you may have missed is drawing near. While you're at it have a look at Mischief Makers and Buck Bumble.

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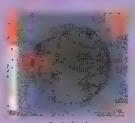
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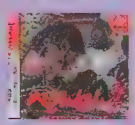
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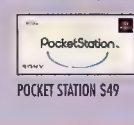
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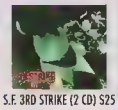
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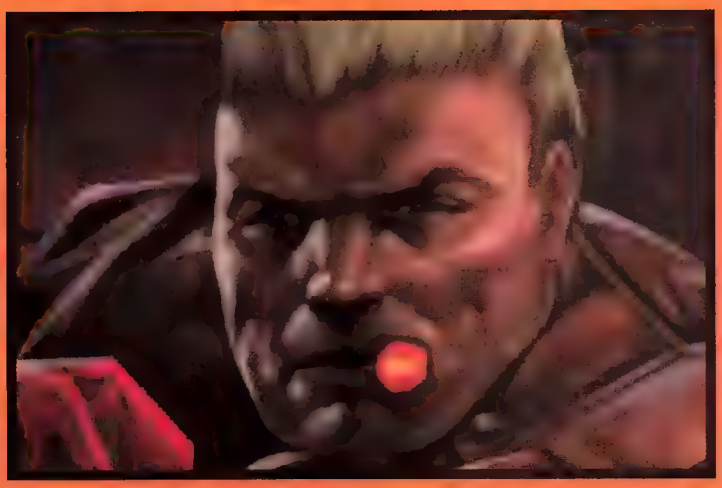

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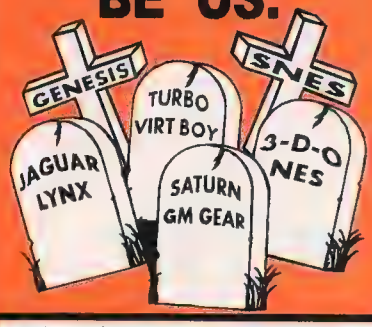

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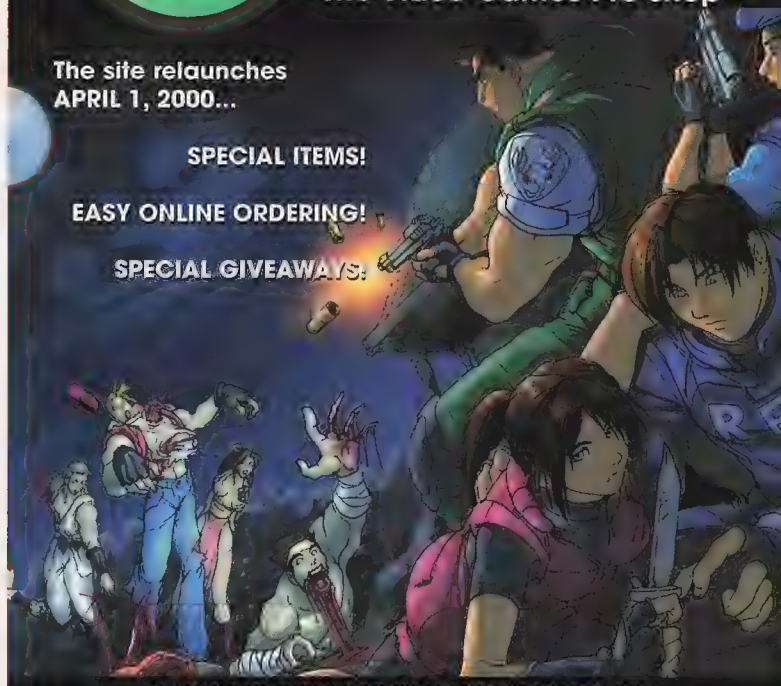

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COMING NEXT MONTH

MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

MAY 2000

Next month, everyone here at GR will be deeply absorbed in the mystery of Playstation 2, which will have come out for a couple weeks by the time you read this. Sure, many of its little secrets have been lurking forward to, won't be appearing at the launch, but it won't be long before we're wasting our Dual Shock 2s down with the likes of Tekken Tag Tournament and Gran Turismo 2000. Plus, we'll be looking down the road towards the American launch, which will see the incredible piece of creativity known as Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee, a game that is sure to set quite a few new standards for the way you look at games. It's going to be a good month.

ISSUE
24
NUMBER TWENTY-FOUR

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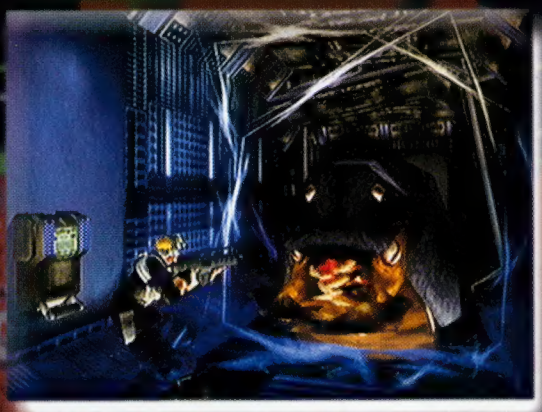
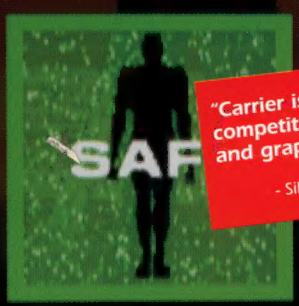
In the 21st Century terrorism reigns supreme in an ever eroding environment. Aboard the Heimdal Aircraft Carrier, survival is all that matters! It's a new world now – a savage, deadly, wasteland where you save whoever is still alive and to hell with the dead.

Vying for control of Earth, the Southern Cross bombs the Heimdal, setting free ARK – a prehistoric organism. When ARK attacks, it implants itself in humans making them hideous, monstrous drones that carry ARK seeds and infect others determined to eliminate ALL of humanity. ARK breeds, mutates, and insanely lusts for the end of human life.

Even if it looks human, you could be screwed 'cause it may be an ARK drone. Who is friend, who is foe?

You are part of an elite unit chosen to isolate and destroy ARK on the Heimdal Aircraft Carrier before it reaches land. You must fearlessly blast your way through a gloomy labyrinth of hallways, flooded control rooms and security levels, battling sinister mutants, while gaining clues and power as you advance. You never know what's lurking in the murky water or around the next corner. Meanwhile, ARK is gaining power after attaching itself to the nuclear core of the Heimdal. Sheer wit and brute force are all that can save you now.





"Carrier is light years ahead of the competition in both game play and graphics."

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